RUBIN

2026

Spiral

WRATH

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Sarah Zabrodski

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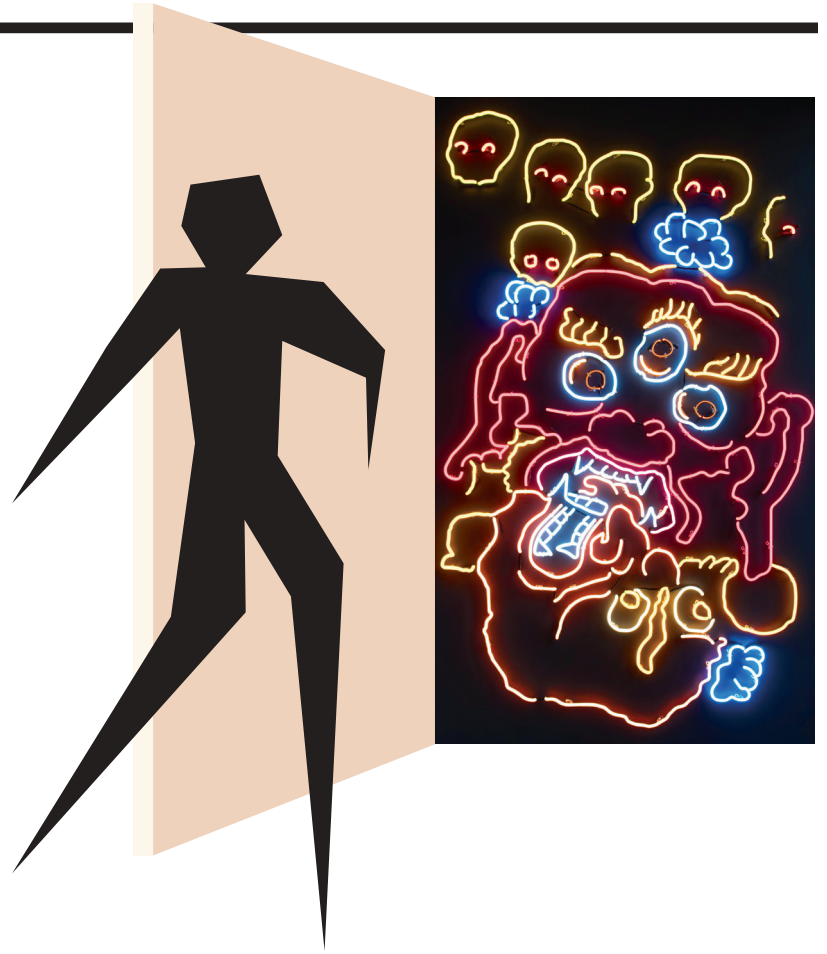
KJ Bowen

Cover art
The Great Black One by Lujan Rai Dongol (see page 18 to learn more)

Wrath Waits at the Door

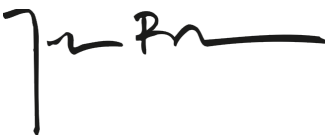


Spiral magazine is celebrating its tenth issue. When it debuted in 2017, the world was a very different place. Our first issue took an in-depth look at sound and how it reverberates through Himalayan art in the Rubin's collection. In subsequent years we contemplated the fluidity of the future, the nature of awakening, and impermanence, and produced a timely post-COVID issue on healing. As we move toward a world with multiple places of power, centers of gravity are shifting, and this leads to massive change in all orbits. Emotions can run high—from fierce passion, to sadness, anger, rage, and wrath. This issue of *Spiral* delves into the latter and aims to provide insights about wrath amid our times in potentially unexpected, illuminating ways.

In these pages we explore wrath through a Buddhist perspective—not as a negative emotion like anger or rage but rather an energy wielded with intention, skill, and compassion to offer protection and remove obstacles. Words, ideas, and illustrations from thinkers, doers, modern-day protectors, and artists provide a more nuanced understanding of wrath and suggest a pathway to harnessing its positive potential.

The Rubin's orbit has changed too, but not so much our center of gravity. Shezad Dawood's neon sculpture *Wrathful Activity, Fierce Energy*, depicting the fierce deity Mahakala, once stood at the entrance of our former building. Nowadays, a door with two depictions of Mahakala welcomes visitors to the Rubin Museum Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room installation at the Brooklyn Museum. In Buddhist temples, wrathful deities are often kept at entrances, as protectors and guardians. They appear to be terrifying—but fear not, the fiercer the appearance, the greater the protective powers.

While wrathful deities may stop us in our tracks, the Rubin continues to invite you in by opening new portals to learn about Himalayan art through traveling exhibitions and projects, partnerships with museums and institutions, and educational resources. As we pursue our second year in a new global model, we look forward to welcoming you at one of the many places we're sharing our projects with the public. Our work of opening doors to see things differently has only just begun.



Jorrit Britschgi
Executive Director

Illustration featuring artwork by Shezad Dawood; *Wrathful Activity, Fierce Energy*; 2018; neon on black painted board; Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art; SC2020.1.1

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Howard Kaplan is an editor and writer who helped found *Spiral* magazine in 2017. He currently works at the Smithsonian and divides his time between Washington, DC, and New York City.

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Elaine Lai is a scholar of the Great Perfection tradition of Buddhism and a lecturer at Stanford University, where she also earned her PhD. Outside of academia, Elaine is a screenwriter and storyteller of multiple forms. "Bellie Meets the Lord of Death" is a condensed version of a feature-length animated screenplay Elaine first completed in 2023, and she worked with Tenzin Tsering to create the character visuals. Elaine is delighted that Bellie is making her debut in *Spiral*.

Tenzin Tsering is a Tibetan Filipino illustrator and 2D artist based in Toronto, Canada, known for her vibrant use of color and dynamic storytelling through visual art. Drawing from her rich South East Asian cultural heritage and the whimsical world of comics, she creates immersive artworks in many creative fields such as mural painting, editorial art, book covers, comic illustrations, and character design.

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Anger's Call to Moral Action

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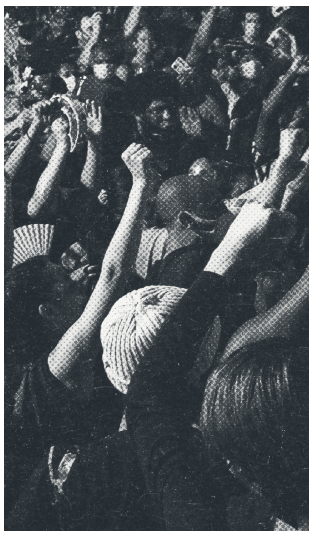

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Sarah Kaushik is a Netherlands-based visual artist with Indian roots, whose work reimagines vintage imagery into surreal "worlds" that blur humor, critique, and dream. Using found photographs and pop-cultural fragments, she probes the absurdities of modern life with her collages, while also celebrating the strangeness of memory and imagination. Her work invites viewers to look closer—and be looked at in return. See her work @thebigeyed_collagist

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Wearing ANGER'S COSTUME

Understanding wrathful imagery in Tibetan Buddhist art

by **Annabella Pitkin**

When you look at a wrathful image from Tibetan Buddhist art, like the image of Mahakala here, what do you see? When buddhas, dharma protectors, and other kinds of deities are shown in wrathful mode, they are characterized by bulging eyes, fangs, auras filled with flames, wild animal skins, and ornaments made of skulls and bones. For people experiencing Tibetan and Himalayan art for the first time, this "wrathful" mode of depicting divine figures can be challenging, even startling if you're not sure what you're looking at.

And yet, as Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhist and Bon writers explain, the wrathful mode is not necessarily what it seems. From a Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhist perspective, while worldly supernatural beings can appear wrathful because they are associated with activities like war, hunting, or disease, enlightened figures like buddhas and bodhisattvas are understood to manifest in a wrathful mode as part of their compassionate, skillful response to the needs of living beings.

Far from channeling negative energy or menacing the viewer, for an enlightened being like a buddha, the wrathful mode expresses compassion and wisdom, enlightened skillfulness and guardianship. Wrathful figures can serve as mirrors of negativity, transforming or deflecting what is frightening or dangerous *away* from living beings. Wrathful deities in Tibetan and Himalayan art are thus not angry in the conventional sense. Rather, they wear anger's costume, repurposing and redirecting qualities we associate with anger and transforming these qualities into protection and help.

Wrathful Imagery

To give brief art historical context, we can place Tibetan and Himalayan wrathful imagery in the context of three "moods" or "modes" of Indian Tantric art: peaceful, semi-wrathful, and wrathful. As art historian Jeff Watt explains, these are not unique to the Tibetan religious world but rather draw on earlier Indian artistic systems. These artistic systems have influenced societies across Asia, from India to Southeast Asia, to the Himalayan region, to China, Japan, and Korea.

Wrathful imagery can also represent the absorption or conversion of non-Buddhist figures into Buddhist pantheons, leaving visual traces of cultural and cross-religious encounter. Consider the eighth-century tantric Buddhist figure Padmasambhava, often described as the "Second Buddha" of Tibet. He is said to have tamed local protectors and land deities across the Himalayan region, converting dangerous supernatural beings into oath-bound Dharma protectors. These protectors kept their frightening appearance but began using their fierce qualities to scare away negativity. Here, wrathful imagery reflects ritual histories of propitiating, taming, and transforming dangerous forces into allies.

Skillful Means

Writing about Indian Buddhist literature, scholar Sonam Kachru has described a "therapeutic" dimension within Buddhist philosophy and practice, fundamentally aimed at relieving suffering. As Kachru explains, Buddhists developed a range of artistic and literary techniques for addressing the needs of different audiences. Among Mahayana Buddhists, this therapeutic approach is called "skillful means," the idea that buddhas and bodhisattvas work to free beings from suffering using whatever methods work best for each individual. Wrathful displays, in this view, are part of a therapeutic and teacherly toolkit that is fundamentally responsive to beings' diverse hopes and fears.

So what do Tibetan Buddhist writers have in mind when they describe wrathful beings as bringing protection and freedom? How might "wrath" be skillful, and how does wrath relate to the toxic way we often experience anger?

Anger can be terrifying, even dangerous. You may recall a time when another person's anger hurt you, or regret a time when your anger hurt someone else. Yet you might also remember a moment when anger enabled you to be direct, even fierce, in standing up for what's right. Maybe in anger you became a force for justice, like a protective older sibling standing up for little kids.

Tibetan Buddhist traditions engage with both these aspects of anger. On the one hand, anger is a poison, with terrifying destructive potential. On the other hand, if ordinary anger is transformed by altruism and wisdom, its liberating qualities like fearlessness and decisive action can emerge. Tibetan and Himalayan art depicting buddhas, deities, and other kinds of beings in wrathful form offers an opportunity to imaginatively explore what this transformation of anger might look like.

Selfish Anger

Any talk of transformation requires clarity about what is being transformed, so let's consider ordinary, selfish anger in more depth. In the earliest Indian Buddhist texts, the Buddha himself is described as urgently warning about the

risks of anger. Anger puts us in danger of losing our minds, of doing emotional or physical violence to others and ourselves. Anger is sticky—it feeds on itself, fueling spirals of grievance, resentment, retaliation, and cruelty.

The Buddha famously described anger as one of a trio of harmful mental states that give rise to all negative thoughts and actions and produce all the suffering we experience. This trio of mental states, often called the Three Poisons, includes anger, addictive greed, and ignorance, specifically ignorance of how things really exist.

We need to cultivate a combination of wisdom and compassion, of insight and self-less altruism, that allows us to metabolize anger and harness its power.

While it's ultimately this ignorance, or mis-cognition of reality, that's described as the "root" poison leading to all other negative emotions, anger may be the most horrible poison. Buddhist teachers of all traditions urge students to be especially careful of anger, which in an instant can destroy a wealth of good deeds and relationships, and bring oceans of suffering.

All Buddhist practitioners thus first reflect on anger as one of the Three Poisons, confronting it as a terrible source of suffering to be abandoned or overcome. Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhists draw on a rich repertoire of practices and techniques for this crucial inner work, shared with traditions across the Buddhist world.

Techniques for Transformation

One important mind-training technique widely practiced by many Buddhist communities is to abandon anger by developing an awareness of its harms. By watching our mind to see how anger arises, and analyzing our experiences of anger and its results, Tibetan Buddhist teachers say we can develop a sincere wish to be free from anger and choose another path. When we realize we do not want anger's terrible consequences, we can decide not to act on anger, and pause before lashing out, for instance.

Another indispensable Buddhist approach for working with anger is to cultivate positive mental states like love, care, and patience. These provide psychic antidotes to anger and other negative emotions. By cultivating love, patience, and the wish for others to be happy, and by gradually expanding these positive emotions to an ever-larger circle of people and other beings, we can develop what Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhist writers call "wholesome" mental states, those that bring happiness for ourselves and others. By cultivating wholesome mental states and replacing anger with love and patience, there's less room for anger to return.

An important component of this second set of mind training techniques is participation in communal practices that put positive mental states into action in the context of relationships. Everything from daily prayers, offerings, and confession rituals, to temple services, pilgrimage, and community service projects can be part of this practice-in-action. Over time, communal practices of love, care, and patience can help us feel appreciation for others even if we don't always like them, and this experience of connection can viscerally counteract our tendency to anger.

An even longer-lasting way to overcome anger is through practices that develop wisdom, in the technical, Buddhist sense of that term. Wisdom that directly realizes the true nature of reality and ourselves is the ultimate antidote to the mental poison of ignorance and all negativities that flow from that ignorance. From the Mahayana perspective of Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhists, when we cultivate perfect wisdom, we realize that all phenomena exist interdependently, rather than separately or in isolation. This interdependence of all phenomena is indivisible from their ultimate emptiness, or freedom, from a permanent, isolated, unchanging self. That is to say, everything and everyone exists relationally, in dynamic interconnection with one another, not in opposition to each other. When we directly perceive this interdependence and emptiness of all phenomena, anger is said to be dissolved at its root, so it will not arise again. After all, how can we hold onto anger at anyone, once we perceive that other beings and their actions are not separate from ourselves, and are ultimately empty of permanent or unchanging existence?

Tibetan Buddhist teachers encourage students to practice using all these Buddhist techniques for addressing anger and negative emotions. From a Tibetan Buddhist perspective, these methods are the essential prerequisites for the advanced practices of the Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhist path of tantric practice, which is described as a Buddhist path of transformation.

Fuel for the Process of Enlightenment

From the Vajrayana Buddhist perspective, every aspect of our experience—from the things we are most proud of to the parts of ourselves we'd rather hide, from our most delightful emotions to our most painful or challenging psychological experiences—all fuel the process of enlightenment. Nothing is left out or left behind. Every aspect of every being is transformed on the path to Buddhahood. This Vajrayana Buddhist framework of transformation thus gives us tools to engage with the concept of

wrath in a broader sense, understanding it as the powerful energy of anger transformed into its liberating mirror image, through wisdom and altruism. Philosopher Emily McRae refers to this transformation as "metabolized" anger. Thus transformed, wrath appears as an enlightened display, motivated by compassion, combining protection, clarity, decisiveness, and strength.

In this Vajrayana view, while ordinary anger is deeply destructive, simply repressing anger or ignoring it won't set us free. Rather, from the perspective of transformation, we need to cultivate a combination of wisdom and compassion, of insight and self-less altruism, that allows us to metabolize anger and harness its power, freed from cruelty and aggression. Wrathful images of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and protector deities display terrifying facets of our own inner and outer experience, but they do so as part of a process of transformation that turns ordinary anger into compassionate activity.

Wrathful enlightened beings are generally depicted standing in an aureole of flames, symbolizing the fire of pristine awareness. Free of delusion, they radiate power and protection for living beings, defending them from harm, shocking them awake from ignorance. This approach of transformation has deep implications for our fractured times. Wrathful images of enlightened beings suggest a path of wakeful attention combining fearlessness with love, and transforming anger into activities of protection and care.

Annabella Pitkin is associate professor of Buddhism and East Asian religions at Lehigh University. Her research focuses on Tibetan Buddhist modernity, Buddhist ideals of renunciation, miracle narratives, and Buddhist biographies. She is the author of *Renunciation and Longing: The Life of a Twentieth-Century Himalayan Buddhist Saint,* which explores themes of non-attachment and the teacher-student relationship in the life of Khunu Lama Tenzin Gyaltsen.

Previous spread: Black Cloak Mahakala; Tibet; 18th century; pigments on cloth; Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art; gift of the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation; F1996.32.7

This page: Shushank Shrestha; *Uber Rat*; 2023; ceramic, in-glaze lustre; Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art; C2024.2.1

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Our monthly emails offer the opportunity to explore art from the Rubin's collection and contemplate big questions at the center of our shared human experience.

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AN ENERGY WITHIN US

Looking at wrath through a Buddhist lens

Gegye Yongyal Rinpoche
interviewed by **Sarah Zabrodski**

Sarah Zabrodski: How would you define wrath within the Buddhist tradition?
Gegye Yongyal Rinpoche: Wrath can be understood in many ways. It can be seen as the form of a god, a protector, a buddha, or as a powerful energy that can be activated within oneself. In Vajrayana Buddhism, wrath often refers to wrathful deities—beings who manifest in fierce, intimidating forms. Without going into all the layers of classification, we can broadly group them into two kinds based on their nature: worldly wrathful gods (powerful beings revered as protectors of the Dharma who dwell in different realms) and enlightened wrathful deities (supramundane beings such as buddhas and bodhisattvas who transcend worldly existence).

From a broader perspective, wrath can also be seen as a type of energy. For most beings, this energy manifests as anger or aggression and leads to harm. But in enlightened beings, wrath is completely free of hatred or self-interest. It becomes a force of protection and transformation—a fierce expression of compassion.

What is the difference between wrath and anger?
On the surface, both wrath and anger may appear similar—they are intense, forceful, and can be frightening. However, their inner nature is completely different. Anger arises from negative emotions and is rooted in ignorance, attachment, or aversion. It causes harm, destroys relationships, and leads to suffering for oneself and others. Wrath, in the enlightened sense, is pure. Although enlightened wrathful beings appear fierce, they have no trace of hatred. Their purpose is to cut through ignorance, subdue harmful forces, and awaken beings to their true nature. They manifest in wrathful forms precisely because some beings cannot be tamed by gentle, peaceful means alone. For example, Mahakala is the wrathful form of Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezig), the Buddha of Compassion. His terrifying appearance hides a mind that is nothing but pure love. Anger is destructive, whereas enlightened wrath is protective and transformative.

What is the connection between wrath and compassion?
To understand the link, we should first recall the three bodies of the Buddha:

1. Dharmakaya—the mind of the Buddha, ultimate reality beyond form.
2. Sambhogakaya—the body of enjoyment, visible only to highly realized beings.
3. Nirmanakaya—the emanation body, appearing in human form such as Buddha Shakyamuni.

Wrathful deities—like peaceful deities—are manifestations of the Sambhogakaya. They are experienced directly only by realized practitioners, but their forms have been recorded and described by great masters. Artists then bring these visions to life through sacred images and statues. From the highest view, wrath and compassion are not opposites. For enlightened beings, wrath is born from compassion. It is a skillful means—an active, fierce method to remove obstacles, destroy harmful influences, and awaken beings who cannot be reached through gentle guidance.

How are wrathful deities useful?

Wrathful deities act as powerful protectors. They can bless practitioners, remove obstacles, and subdue harmful forces. When we have a good connection with such beings, our spiritual energy becomes stronger, and problems often dissolve before they manifest. They also tame those who are deeply trapped in harmful patterns. Their fierce compassion can cut through stubborn negative emotions and guide beings toward liberation. But these forces are not to be taken lightly—just as they protect, they can also be fearsome if disrespected.

What do people misunderstand about wrathful deities?

Many people fear their appearance. They see the sharp teeth, blazing eyes, and terrifying ornaments and assume these beings are evil. But their appearance is symbolic—every detail represents the destruction of ignorance and the transformation of negativity. For example, Mahakala's frightening form does not mean he causes harm. It means he has the power to crush the forces that cause suffering. In contrast, ghostly beings or pretas that appear wrathful are actually trapped in suffering themselves and cannot offer true protection.

From another perspective, wrath is also a kind of energy within us. When locked in ignorance, it manifests as harmful anger. But when transformed through practice, it becomes a powerful ally—a force of clarity and fearlessness. Even non-Buddhists, through offerings and respectful relationship, have felt the protective presence of wrathful beings.

Do all deities have a wrathful form?

Not all deities have wrathful forms in every tradition. Some deities are known to manifest in both peaceful and wrathful aspects, such as Vajrapani. Avalokiteshvara has a wrathful manifestation as Mahakala. The peaceful Manjushri has the wrathful form Vajrabhairava (Yamantaka). But some deities, such as Tara, are generally regarded as peaceful. In the Kriya Tantra tradition, Tara does not appear in a wrathful form, though in Atisha's tradition she takes semi-wrathful aspects, and in the Suryagupta lineage she manifests in fully wrathful forms. Yet Tara is most widely revered as a peaceful deity.

How do practitioners work with wrathful deities?

In Vajrayana Buddhism, one should first find a qualified teacher and receive proper empowerment and instructions. Then the practice is done according to the scriptures, with mantra recitation, visualization, and offerings. Some practitioners focus on ultimate realization, using the deity practice as a path to enlightenment. Others work with the deities for worldly benefits, such as protection, health, or prosperity. In some Himalayan cultures, there are even traditions—some controversial—of making animal sacrifices to wrathful gods. From a Buddhist view, such violent offerings are unnecessary and ideally should be replaced with symbolic, non-harmful rituals.

Can you tell us about a moment in your life when you experienced the power of a wrathful deity?

From childhood, I was taught mantras and prayers by my mother and teachers. We had a shrine room with images of Buddha, Tara, and Mahakala. My mother told me, "This is your protector—always pray to him." When I was a teenager, I had a terrible accident. My bicycle brakes failed while riding in the mountains, and I was headed straight for a cliff. I screamed for help, and three men nearby rushed to save me. They were injured in the process, but I escaped with only minor scratches. I believe they were sent through the blessings of the deities and Buddha.

Later in my monastic life, I struggled with anxiety and frustration. Chanting mantras and visualizing wrathful deities calmed my mind and dissolved those negative energies. Their fierce compassion became a shield, not only against outer harm but also against the inner enemies of anger, fear, and doubt.

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Think of a wrathful deity like a loving mother. When her child behaves well, she is gentle and smiling—like a peaceful deity. But when the child misbehaves and risks harm, she may raise her voice or show a stern face. This is not out of hatred but out of love—to protect the child from greater danger. In the same way, buddhas sometimes manifest in wrathful forms to tame beings who cannot be reached through gentle means. Wrath, when purified, is simply compassion in a fierce form—an unstoppable force that protects, awakens, and guides us to our true nature.

H.E. Gegye Yongyal Rinpoche is the third reincarnate Buddhist master and a respected spiritual leader in the Vajrayana tradition. Trained from an early age in sacred scriptures, rituals, and meditation, he is dedicated to preserving authentic Buddhist teachings while engaging in compassionate community service worldwide. Rinpoche guides students in meditation, compassion practices, and the wisdom of both sutra and tantra scriptures. His mission is to promote peace, protect the Dharma, and inspire spiritual transformation across cultures.

Sarah Zabrodski is the senior editor and publications manager at the Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art.

All Creatures Safe and Sound

The cofounder of Farm Sanctuary on transforming anger and saving lives

by **Howard Kaplan**

It began with hot dogs, vegan hot dogs, which Gene Baur and his companions sold out of a Volkswagen van at Grateful Dead concerts back in 1986. Their early work also entailed revealing to people the cruelty of animal agriculture and agribusinesses. "We felt that if we showed people what was happening, they would be appalled and stop eating animals, because most people grow up without thinking of the harm they are doing buying these products. That was our initial simplistic thinking. We still think there's value in showing people, but it's a lot more complex than that."

Their first rescue was a sheep named Hilda that Gene and his volunteer team found in a dead pile of cows, pigs, and sheep behind a stockyard in Pennsylvania. When they got closer, the sheep lifted her head. "We were stunned that a living animal would be left here." They removed her from the dead pile and assumed that she would have to be euthanized. But when they brought her to the veterinarian, she started perking up. "It turns out she probably passed out from heat exhaustion in the truck and was unconscious when the trucker was unloading all the animals. He assumed she was dead and just threw her on the dead pile. She recovered and lived with us for more than ten years and is buried at the sanctuary."

Gene sees wrath as a force for good that can evoke a reaction to grave injustices and lead to courageous acts. "For me," Gene describes, "where there's anger, where there's pain and injustice, it is upsetting. I take that energy and try to transform it and use that energy towards action. I also think it's important not to dwell in anger but to transform it into positive forward momentum. Anger can eat us up if we don't transform it."

2026 marks the fortieth anniversary of Farm Sanctuary, which has come a long way from the days of the Volkswagen van and has two locations in Watkins Glen, New York, and Los Angeles, California. Though times have changed, and more people have switched to plant-based diets, the ideas of compassion and injustice are as important as ever. Horrific images of what he's seen in the stockyards and slaughterhouses often come to him, but Gene says, "I don't focus too much energy on the bad things. I notice and pay attention and record the bad things to be able to educate people." How does Gene attribute his longevity in the field? "I make a conscious effort to dwell in the things I can do instead of those I cannot."

Gene Baur is a best-selling author, activist, and cofounder and president of Farm Sanctuary, America's leading farm animal protection organization.

BELLIE meets the LORD OF DEATH
Story by Elaine Lai
Art by Tenzin Tsering
In Bellie's world, there are only two things that bring her joy in life: gummy bears and the stories that she and Mama created.
Bellie lives in these stories to escape from the bullies at school and from the reality that mama is very sick.
Mama is the only one in the world who believes in Bellie and makes her feel okay.
My Bellie's heart is so good.
But on the night of Bellie's 11th birthday, Mama leaves the realm of the living.
So, Bellie makes a special wish that is heard by Lord Yama, the Lord of Death...
Please, Please!
...and a portal is activated!
AHHHHHHHHH!!!
LORD YAMA! PLEASE GIVE MY MOTHER BACK!
ONE LIFE IN EXCHANGE FOR ANOTHER?
LOOK INSIDE MY WHEEL.
WHO HAVE YOU PRAYED TO MEET YOUR WHOLE LIFE?
My... father?

You always wondered how he was, didn't you?
Well there he is with his family, but it's not you.
Where was he when you needed him?
Nowhere...
And nowhere he will be in the future. Say the words and your mother's life will be exchanged with his.
N-No! I couldn't live with myself!
Why ever not? His kind is the most selfish of all. He won't learn his lesson even after death.
After all, it was his fault she couldn't see a doctor in time.
It's not fair! Uncle said I might have to go to foster care. I don't have anything...
Just say the word and all your suffering will end.
Before Bellie agrees, a sudden pain in her heart stops her. It all feels so wrong. Mama would never want her to take the life of another.
No!
I can't do it! Make it stop!
Please... Can I see her one last time?
You've passed my test. One wish may be granted.
Yama hands Bellie the Wish-Fulfilling gem.
Mama! I was so scared. Please let me stay here with you.
I know you've been sad, but it's not your time yet.
Don't make me go back! There's nothing for me there.
I promise you, Bellie Bear, you will heal from this. You've proven that you won't ever harm anyone to get what you want. You have true courage and it will protect you forever.
How can I find you again?
Your heart. Protect it and I will always be with you.
My Bellie's heart is so good.
END.

Pop Culture

CAN VIOLENCE BE COMPASSIONATE?

Wrath, grief, and Buddhist ethics in the anime series *Demon Slayer*

by **Ronald S. Green**

In many religious and philosophical traditions, wrath is synonymous with rage, destruction, and moral failure. But in Buddhist thought, particularly in the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions, wrath can be understood differently, as a form of compassionate energy. Wrathful figures such as Vajrapani and Achala wield weapons to cut through ignorance and protect practitioners from their own cravings. Far from representing uncontrolled anger, such wrath is used with skillful intention, removing obstacles to liberation. This redefinition opens a powerful ethical question: Can violence be compassionate?

One of the most striking and morally complex illustrations of this question appears outside of traditional Buddhist texts in contemporary Japanese popular culture. *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba*, a manga and anime series written and illustrated by Koyoharu Gotōge, debuted in 2016 and quickly rose to international prominence for its compelling storytelling, evocative art, and emotional weight. It has become a cultural powerhouse, lavished with awards for revitalizing the manga industry. The 2020 film installment, *Demon Slayer: Mugen Train*, became the highest-grossing anime film as well as the highest-grossing Japanese film of any kind of all time, surpassing Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*, which had held the record since 2001.

Set in the Taishō era (1912–1926), the series follows Tanjiro Kamado, a kind-hearted boy whose family is slaughtered by demons. In *Demon Slayer*, demons are former humans who have become predators with supernatural powers and who survive by consuming human energy. Among Tanjiro's family, only his sister Nezuko survives the attack, but she is transformed into a demon. Tanjiro joins the Demon Slayer Corps to avenge his family and to save both Nezuko and humanity, beginning a journey shaped by moral complexity, loyalty, and self-sacrifice.

Among the ensemble cast, Gyōmei Himejima, the Stone Hashira, stands apart. A blind monk with unmatched strength, Gyōmei channels Buddhist discipline, grief, and spiritual clarity in his role as a protector. As one of the Hashira, the elite corps of Demon Slayers entrusted with the most dangerous battles, his story raises one of the central ethical questions of both Buddhism and *Demon Slayer*: What does it mean to destroy with compassion?

Gyōmei Himejima: Wrath Without Hatred

Introduced early in the series as the towering, silent Stone Hashira, Gyōmei seems at first stoic, even cold. Draped in mala beads, a monk's robe, and garments inscribed with the *nenbutsu—Namu Amida Butsu*, the Pure Land invocation of Buddha Amitabha—he embodies a quiet yet unmistakable link to Buddhist ethics. He chants the *nenbutsu* even in battle and is often shown weeping, mourning both his comrades and those who count themselves his enemies.

What sets Gyōmei apart is that he is both the most physically powerful demon slayer and the most emotionally expressive. While others kill demons with fury or vengeance, Gyōmei cries. He performs violent acts, but with no pleasure and no hatred. Instead, his violence emerges from a well of grief and duty, an expression of compassion so intense it demands action. Even his name means "Island of sorrow who journeys through darkness."

In one scene, Gyōmei speaks words that recall Buddhist views on rebirth and karmic suffering. Reflecting on Tanjiro's fate, he laments, "It would have been better if he had not been born," hinting at the tragedy of karmic entanglement and the difficulty of liberation. His hope is that those bound by suffering might have been reborn into a Pure Land free of demons and violence.

The Hearing Bodhisattva: Avalokiteshvara in the Taishō Era

Gyōmei has been compared by some commentators to Avalokiteshvara (known as Kannon in Japanese and Guanyin in Chinese), the bodhisattva of compassion who *hears the cries of the world.* The connection is more than symbolic.

Gyōmei is blind. Yet he "sees" through sound, using extraordinary hearing to perceive the world, predict movement, and fight. This is more than a representation of superhuman ability; it is narrative symbolism. Avalokiteshvara is said to perceive all suffering through sound. Gyōmei, similarly, hears before he acts. His wrath is never reactive. It is filtered through compassionate attunement.

In this way, Gyōmei echoes the bodhisattva ideal: delaying personal peace or liberation to help others. Just as Avalokiteshvara vows to postpone Buddhahood until all beings are saved, Gyōmei delays rest and healing to continue fighting for those who cannot protect themselves.

Grief as Moral Energy

Gyōmei's wrath is born of grief transformed. His traumatic backstory marked by the loss of the orphaned children he once protected and the cruel injustice of being falsely accused of their deaths, leaves him with a sorrow that runs deep. But rather than retreat into despair or vengeance, Gyōmei channels that grief into the protective work of the Demon Slayer Corps.

This transformation of suffering into action has roots in Buddhist psychology. Mahayana ethics teaches that a bodhisattva feels the suffering of others as their own. In Vajrayana Buddhism, wrathful deities wear fearsome faces because their compassion is fierce enough to cut through delusion and danger. Gyōmei's tears flow from the same source of clarity. Each time he raises his weapon, he does so with sorrow, carrying the burden of violence so that others may be spared.

Upaya: Skillful Means and Compassionate Action

In Mahayana Buddhism, the doctrine of *upaya* (skillful means) teaches that enlightened beings may take unconventional or even shocking actions if doing so helps sentient beings move toward awakening. The famous *Upayakaushalya Sutra* even recounts the story of a bodhisattva, a compassionate being who seeks awakening while helping others awaken, who kills a murderer in order to save a ship's passengers, acting out of compassion for both the victims and the perpetrator.

Gyōmei's actions follow this logic. He does not kill demons to exact vengeance but to prevent them from causing further harm. He chants *Namu Amida Butsu* even while fighting, affirming that his actions are not his own, that he entrusts them to Buddha Amitabha. In this sense, he is acting from entrustment and the vow to save all sentient beings from suffering. His wrath is an instrument of compassion, sharpened by practice and restrained by grief.

The Wrath of the Bodhisattva

As a professor of Buddhist studies and Japanese religion, I have introduced *Demon Slayer* in the classroom as a tool for exploring Buddhist ethics. The character of Gyōmei often evokes strong responses from students.

After watching scenes in which Gyōmei fights while mourning, one student asked, "If Gyōmei doesn't hate even the demons, does that mean violence can be compassionate?" Another noted, "His strength doesn't come from anger but from something greater."

These reactions echo classical Buddhist dilemmas about force and compassion. They show how anime, like ancient Buddhist stories, can serve as a space for moral imagination, inviting viewers to reflect on what it means to act ethically in a world of suffering. Gyōmei embodies this convergence as a warrior-monk whose actions come from a vow to protect. In him we see that even in a violent world it is possible to act without hatred, to weep while striking, to mourn while protecting, to destroy without cruelty, and to love fiercely even in the fire.

Ronald S. Green is a professor of religious and Asian studies at Coastal Carolina University. His research explores the intersections of Asian philosophical traditions and contemporary culture, especially in film, anime, novels, and lived religious practice. Combining close textual study with immersive fieldwork, he examines how ancient traditions find new expression today. His teaching spans Buddhism, Shinto, meditation traditions, Japanese popular culture, and ethnographic methods for studying African and Asian religious life in South Carolina.

Noma Bar is is a graphic designer, illustrator, and artist known for his bold, minimalist style. His work has appeared in *Time Out London*, *BBC*, *The Economist*, and more. He has illustrated over one hundred magazine covers, published over five hundred illustrations, and released three books. Bar has earned multiple awards, including a Gold Clio and a D&AD Yellow Pencil. His *Cut It Out* exhibition was a London Design Festival highlight and nominated for Design Museum's Designs of the Year.

Previous page illustration by Noma Bar

A Room with Many Views

The Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room tells many stories

by Howard Kaplan

The Rubin Museum Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room dazzles on many levels in its current iteration at the Brooklyn Museum where it is on view for six years as part of a collaboration between the two institutions. When you step inside, you enter an exquisitely curated world of sacred objects from the Rubin's collection of Himalayan art. The room hums with history and religious meaning as your eye travels from scroll paintings (thangkas) to ritual objects to musical instruments to traditional Tibetan furniture, all dating from the twelfth to twenty-first century. The more than one hundred artworks and ritual objects are displayed as they would be in an elaborate Tibetan Buddhist household shrine. The senses awaken with the soft sounds of chanted prayers by monks and nuns; flickering butter lamps; and the subtle smell of incense.

Joan Cummins, the Lisa and Bernard Selz Senior Curator of Asian Art at the Brooklyn Museum, reflected on the shift of the Shrine Room from the Rubin's former building in Chelsea to this new location, saying, "The effect of walking into the Shrine Room in Brooklyn is maybe even more dramatic than it was on 17th Street. This beautiful, powerful installation is now surrounded by a noisier museum with lots of white walls and a strong emphasis on things contemporary. If anything, the Shrine Room is even more transporting, even more centering in this new context."

While on view in Brooklyn, objects in the Shrine Room will be periodically switched out to highlight each of the four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism: Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, and Geluk. The first to be featured is the Geluk Tibetan Buddhist tradition. It is the youngest of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism and was founded on the teachings of Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) and his students. Main figures include earlier Buddhist masters, the Indian teacher Atisha and his Tibetan disciple Dromton; Maitreya, the future buddha; the tantric deities Chakrasamvara, Vajrayogini, and Vajrabhairava; and Manjushri, an embodiment of learned wisdom. Protectors such as Yama Dharmajama and Magzor Gyalmo also feature prominently in Geluk ritual practice.

Though the highlighted traditions vary, the Shrine Room remains a place to step away from the chaos of daily life and enter a timeless world of Buddhist ideas and objects.

RUBIN

To plan your visit go to rubinmuseum.org/tibetan-buddhist-shrine-room

Photo by Matthew Carasella

The Great Black One

Uncovering the symbolism behind this issue's cover art

by **Lujan Rai Dongol**

The wrathful deity Mahakala looks over the human realm from the skies above. He is no ordinary Mahakala. He is punk Mahakala! Why punk? The term punk is not just for aesthetics—it goes much deeper. To reject all earthly desires in order to stay on the path of liberation and dharma is the basic ideology of Buddhism. Isn't that a bit "punk"?

Growing up in a closed-off neighborhood and a turbulent home, I always felt different and unusual. I broke rules. I grew up in a sub-culture of anime, cartoons, manga, and a traditional Buddhist, Hindu, and Rai household. I continuously reinvented myself.

My path to dharma came from a dark time in my life, when light seeped in through the weeping willows. I found myself. I was finally accepted, somewhere, somehow. In this day and age, Mahakala is manifested from a part of my soul. He may not look traditional, but I know, for a fact, that he is real, for I felt his calling! The manifestation of Mahakala is so pure, unique, and powerful, because it is the only way I can actually see him. I feel it is the closest I've ever been to "The Great One."

And yet there is also Baby Karma—my alter ego! Once a child who was ignored became the child who started to ignore. Baby Karma was a trouble child and a troubled child. We all have Baby Karma in us, and that is okay! From the witnessing of the Wrathful Ones I was able to console my inner child. I learned vulnerability through surrender; I learned vulnerability through acceptance.

Before Baby Karma never bowed to anyone. Now Baby Karma bows his head in the presence of Mahakala's fierce compassion. Baby Karma wears a karmic chain with three hearts representing a rooster, pig, and snake, the symbols of the three poisons that lead to suffering. The chain is around his neck, suggesting the battle to overcome adversity occurs on a daily basis. It is a life-long effort and journey.

In Buddhism, a severed hand or body part represents detachment from material things. Here, the cat head balloon symbolizes detachment. The alien octopus represents karmic entanglements and the recurrence of suffering. Baby Karma is the epitome of perseverance.

Which is a little punk too.

Lujan Rai Dongol is a transdisciplinary artist based in Nepal who weaves Himalayan iconography with contemporary sensibilities. Rooted in thangka philosophy yet unbound by tradition, his practice transforms the sacred into living, evolving forms. Through bold color, intuitive symbolism, and transcultural echoes, he merges the divine with the everyday. Each work is a meditation on identity, impermanence, and collective memory, where ancient deities find new voices and the past and present converge in vibrant, contemplative dialogue. See his work @__lujann_

Biodegradable Blessings

A social entrepreneur creates eco-friendly prayer flags and khata scarves while empowering local women

by **Howard Kaplan**

As a child growing up in Nepal, Ang Dolma Sherpa questioned her mother's frugalness. As it turns out, her mother's reluctance to buy things came from her training as a Peace Corps worker in Nepal and her knowledge of what was biodegradable and what would sit in landfills and riverways for a long time. Ang Dolma's father ran the family's trekking company and had great reverence for his homeland.

Like many Buddhist families, the Sherpas accumulated more khatas at home than they knew what to do with. These traditional ceremonial scarves had a silky feel but were made of nylon and other petroleum-based products, as were the colorful prayer flags that clogged rivers, streams, and mountain paths in the Himalayas. Even though Ang Dolma knew it was a problem, she did not really think about it until her father's death and cremation ceremony, when the burned khatas spread black plumes of smoke that made it difficult to breathe. "I had a firsthand experience of how they were being discarded and burned while emitting toxic fumes."

Ang Dolma and her mother talked about how, in the past, khatas were made from cotton. They were non-toxic and their fibers broke down naturally. In 2013, mother and daughter set out to make environmentally friendly khatas by removing the polyester and any other toxic fibers. Six years later, their business began to catch on.

During the pandemic she hired her didis, women who make the prayer flags in their homes with sewing machines. Sixteen women are now employed. They use raw cotton for the prayer flags, eco inks, and a bamboo and cotton blend for the khatas. And because the didis don't need to travel to work and don't use heavy machinery, "Our carbon footprint is less."

"Even though biodegradable khatas and prayer flags started as providing an alternative to synthetic cultural products," Ang Dolma says, "over the years it has evolved into the initiative Biodegradable Blessings, where we work with community members, monasteries, and like-minded people, raising awareness to bring back the heart of khata offerings and hoisting prayer flags in a mindful and sustainable way."

"For me, this is also a very simple way of practicing Buddhism," Ang Dolma adds. "Growing up with both parents who worked outside the home, we were not the typical Buddhist family who attended gompas (temple) and took teachings. And the simple thing my father taught me has become a very solid principle in my life: that if you just care and are mindful of your action, you don't have to go to temple as much. I truly believe in that. The Buddhist teachings all come down to not harming one another."

Ang Dolma Sherpa is a social entrepreneur who won the top "ideator" award at Idea Studio Nepal 2019 for her concept of biodegradable khata, or scarves.

Illustration by Twinz Artists

What My Rage Showed Me

An activist and filmmaker learned how to access her anger to heal and overturned some long-held beliefs about the relationship between rage and love along the way

by Valarie Kaur

I always thought that the opposite of love was rage, the extreme, irrational, uncontrollable expression of anger, the force that drove people to hurt others with their words or weapons. Rage was to be tamed and wrestled down like a wild animal within us. We were only as evolved or spiritual or good as our ability to subdue it. Only when our rage was subdued could we unlock our human potential to love others, even our opponents.

This was a lie.

The opposite of love is not rage. The opposite of love is indifference. Love engages all our emotions: *Joy is the gift of love. Grief is the price of love. Anger is the force that protects that which is loved*. We cannot access the depth of loving ourselves or others without our rage.

My Rage

Neurobiologists call oxytocin the love hormone: The more oxytocin in the body, the more care and nurturing mammals show for their babies. Oxytocin decreases aggression in a mother's body overall with one exception—in defense of her young. When babies are threatened, oxytocin actually increases aggression. For mothers, rage is part of love: It is the biological force that protects that which is loved.

When I learned this, I thought of my mother and the ferocity in her eyes when she had fought for me. I did not know that she had that kind of rage roaring inside her. She couldn't access it for herself. But she could access it for me. It took me a long time to learn how to access it for *myself*.

My rage showed me that I was worth protecting, that racism and sexism were not abstract oppressions but flesh-and-blood violations that lived in the body, and that the body had to find a way to unleash all of its mighty ferocity to protect itself in order to know itself to be alive. The tiger had always been with me, inside me; I just had to find a way to release it and ride it. And where did it deliver me? To a place where my assailants no longer had psychological power over me, because I had reclaimed the sovereignty of my body.

Rage Is Healthy

Rage is a healthy, normal, and necessary response to trauma. It is a rightful response to the social traumas of patriarchy, white supremacy, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, and poverty. But we live in a culture that punishes us when we show our teeth—we are called hysterical when we raise our voice; we are less likely to be believed when we tell our story with fury; and, if we are anything other than deferential with an officer, we might get hurt or shot, and even then, our deference might not make a difference. Black and brown people have been schooled in the suppression of our emotions as a matter of survival. "We learned when we were very little that black people could die from feeling rage and expressing it to the wrong white folks," says bell hooks. "We learned to choke down our rage." We now have the data to prove what community healers know well: Repressing anger comes at a cost to our health. It results in high rates of autoimmune diseases. It amplifies our perception of physical pain.

The opposite of repression is also dangerous. Too many men have been socialized to unleash rage without apology. For men, rage is often a secondary emotion that masks sadness or shame. Violence is the socially conditioned default for male rage, and the proliferation of guns has made male aggression deadlier than ever: Mass shooters are typically men, and the majority of these men have physically abused the women in their lives. We might think that the solution is teaching our boys not to show aggression. But suppressed anger always finds a way to explode. For women and girls, it is more likely to explode internally as self-hatred or stress or illness. For men and boys, it is more likely to erupt as violence against others.

The solution is not to suppress our rage or let it explode, but to process our rage in *safe containers*—emotional spaces safe enough to express our body's impulses without shame and without harming ourselves or others.

Safe containers take many forms: shaking, weeping, venting, writing, art, music, dance, drama, meditation, trauma therapies, rituals, and ceremonies of all kinds. Only when we give rage an external expression outside our bodies can we be in relationship with it. We can then ask: What information does my rage carry?

The solution is not to suppress our rage or let it explode, but to process our rage in safe containers.

Divine Rage

One summer while visiting Kolkata, India, my friend Deonnie took me to the Kalighat Temple and introduced me to the subject of her academic study—the Hindu goddess Kali. We walked through the temple barefoot, our feet stained red from crushed flowers and the blood of goats. Kalighat is one of the only major temples in India where animal sacrifices are performed daily. In Hindu practice, you give the deity what they desire. Krishna, the god who dances with his flute, is offered milk-based sweets. In this temple, Kali, the mother of life, is offered blood. The goat meat is then distributed to the homeless, sold to devotees, or donated to Mother Teresa's Home for the Dying next door. I began to watch the goat sacrifices, one clean cut of the head after another. The bleating filled my ears and the drums beat in my chest and the smell of blood filled the air. It smelled like menstrual blood. The crowd pressed my body into the *garba griha*—the "house of the womb" or innermost sacred shrine—until I was thrust in front of her: a black stone, draped in sari

cloths of all colors, three large eyes that penetrated me. I saw Kali, and she saw me. A priest pressed a red dot on my forehead with such mighty force that I almost fell back. As the bells rang out I stumbled outside and sat on the cool stone for a long time.

I thought about Kali's origin story in the Hindu tradition. According to one famous story, all the gods were in battle against a great demon, Mahisha, who could not be defeated, so they poured their energies together to create the goddess Durga. When Durga went to battle with the demon, her ferocious energy concentrated in her forehead and out sprang Kali. She was the fiercest form of the goddess, clad in a tiger skin, wearing a garland of skulls, mouth agape, tongue rolling out as she drank the blood of life. Kali in her many forms was most beloved as the Divine Mother, to be revered and feared and loved, because she protected us. The rage of Kali made me wonder: Can we see our own rage as animal *and* divine?

Divine rage is fierce, disciplined, and visionary. It is the fearsome wrath of Ekajati, or Blue Tara, when she fought demons in Tibetan Buddhist legends. Or the fury of Jesus when he overturned the tables of the money changers in the temple in Christian scripture. The aim of divine rage is not vengeance but to reorder the world. It is precise and purposeful, like the focused fury projected into the world from the forehead of the goddess. It points us to the humanity of even those who we are fighting. Kali is clad in a tiger skin: It is only *through* accessing her ferocity that divine rage can take form in the world. Perhaps our task as human beings is to find safe containers for our raw reactionary rage—and then choose to harness that energy in a way that creates a new world for *all* of us.

Tending to the Rage Within Us

Now I see instances of divine rage everywhere. I see it in the activists who storm the stage at political rallies, disrupt confirmation hearings, and confront senators in elevators. I see it in people who stand up to tell the truth at school board meetings, in workplaces, on social media, and at their kitchen tables. There are many ways to confront one's opponents without anger. But in the case of ongoing social injustices, expressing outrage is often the only way to be heard.

Divine rage can make people uncomfortable: It can feel disruptive, frightening, and unpredictable. There are those who wish to police such rage in the name of civility. But civility is too often used to silence pain that requires people to change their lives. Rather than taming public expressions of moral outrage, perhaps it is up to the rest of us to train our ears to "hear beyond hearing," in the words of theorist Judith Butler, so that we can discern the truth of the pain of injustice and confront our own complicity and responsibility. Just as we need accomplices to hold protected spaces where the most traumatized among us tend to our grief, so, too, do we need accomplices to stand by us when we express our rage, *and* help others to understand it.

"Anger is loaded with information and energy," said Audre Lorde. "Every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being. Focused with precision it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change." Lorde asks us to tend to the rage within us as a symphony, "to listen to its rhythms, to learn within it, to move beyond the manner of presentation to the substance, to tap that anger as an important source of empowerment." It is a rhythm: Step away to *rage*, return to *listen*, and *reimagine* the solutions together. It becomes a kind of dance—to release raw rage in a safe container, in order to send divine rage into the world, like focused fury. The way of the warrior-sage is not only loving-kindness but loving-revolution, or revolutionary love.

From the book *SEE NO STRANGER: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love* by Valarie Kaur, published by One World, an imprint of Random House, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. Copyright © 2020 by Valarie Kaur.

Valarie Kaur is a renowned social justice leader, lawyer, award-winning filmmaker, faith leader, mother, and bestselling author of *See No Stranger*, *Sage Warrior*, and *World of Wonder*. She leads the Revolutionary Love Project, building a movement to reclaim love as a force for justice. A daughter of Punjabi Sikh farmers in California, Valarie earned degrees at Stanford University, Harvard Divinity School, and Yale Law School and holds several honorary doctorates. She lives in Los Angeles in a multigenerational family.

Tashi Dendup and **Ugyen Samdrup**, together known as **Twinz Artists**, were born in 1988 in Thimphu, Bhutan. They have degrees in fine arts from Lovely Professional University Jalandhar in India. Buddhism, consciousness, psychedelics, the human warrior spirit, shamanism, and the tangible and the intangible culture of Bhutan influence their subject matter, which they express through the use of traditional and nontraditional icons and symbols.

WRATHFUL WISDOM

WRATHFUL WISDOM

This terrifying deity is armed with the skillful means to transform

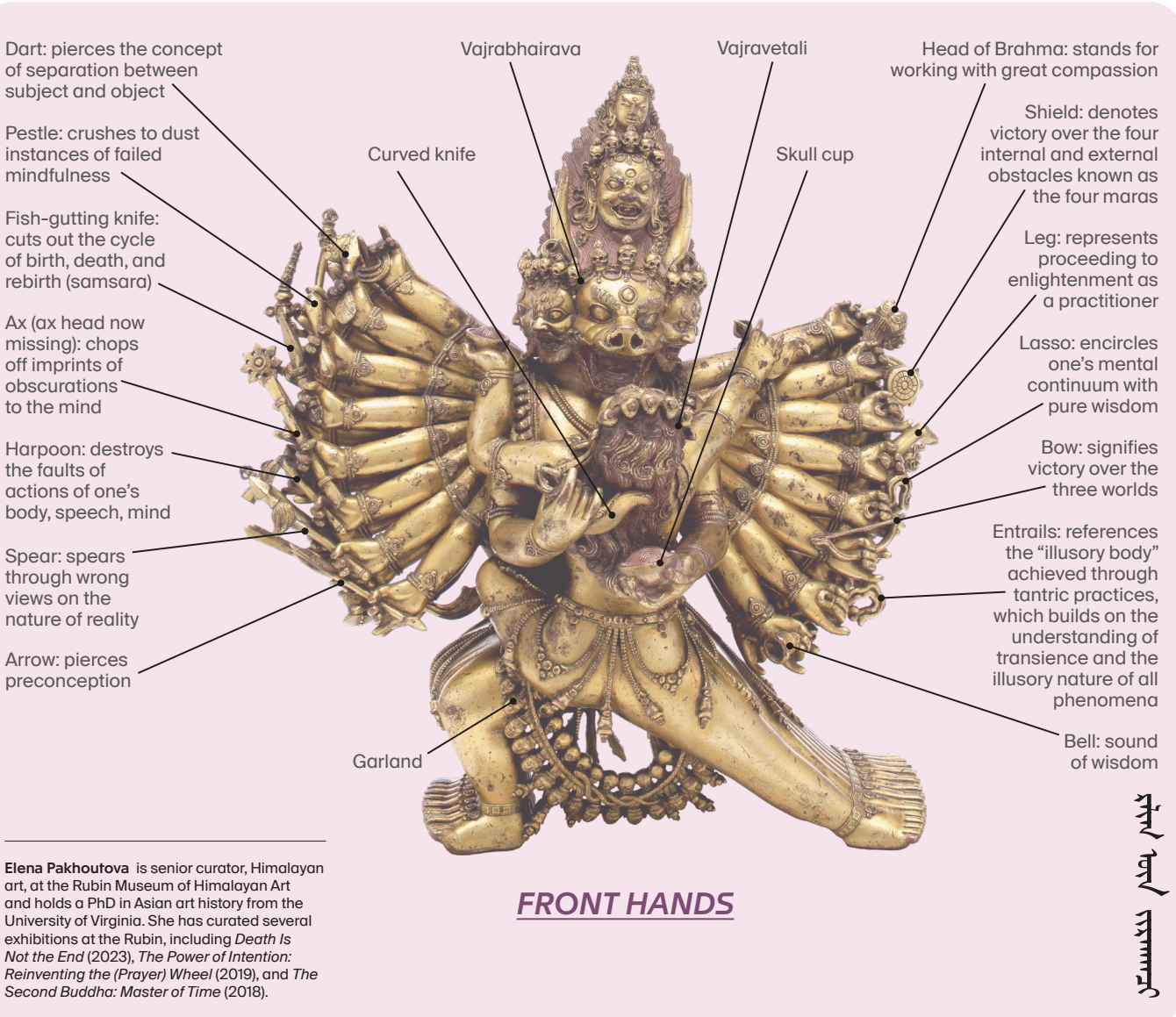
by **Elena Pakhoutova**

The Two Figures

Vajrabhairava's union with consort Vajravetali symbolizes the confluence of the compassionate method and the wisdom of perceiving ultimate reality, two aspects necessary for enlightenment, as explained in Tantric Buddhist texts and practices. Vajravetali is equally wrathful in appearance with three bulging eyes, head adorned with skulls, and the curved knife and scull cup in her hands. Her left leg hooks around and grips the male deity.

Iconography

Vajrabhairava has nine heads, thirty-four arms, and sixteen legs. His buffalo head is topped by the head of Manjushri, signifying the deity's true nature. His other wrathful heads have three eyes and are adorned with crowns of skulls. A garland of severed heads drapes from his shoulders almost down to the ground. These features mirror the terrifying appearance of the Lord of Death, Yama, but are transmuted by wisdom and symbolize overcoming obstacles on the path to liberation from fear, attachment, and anger toward full awakening.


Dart: pierces the concept of separation between subject and object
Pestle: crushes to dust instances of failed mindfulness
Fish-gutting knife: cuts out the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (samsara)
Ax (ax head now missing): chops off imprints of obscurations to the mind
Harpoon: destroys the faults of actions of one's body, speech, mind
Spear: spears through wrong views on the nature of reality
Arrow: pierces preconception
Vajrabhairava
Vajravetali
Curved knife
Skull cup
Garland
Head of Brahma: stands for working with great compassion
Shield: denotes victory over the four internal and external obstacles known as the four maras
Leg: represents proceeding to enlightenment as a practitioner
Lasso: encircles one's mental continuum with pure wisdom
Bow: signifies victory over the three worlds
Entrails: references the "illusory body" achieved through tantric practices, which builds on the understanding of transience and the illusory nature of all phenomena
Bell: sound of wisdom
FRONT HANDS

Elena Pakhoutova is senior curator, Himalayan art, at the Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art and holds a PhD in Asian art history from the University of Virginia. She has curated several exhibitions at the Rubin, including *Death Is Not the End* (2023), *The Power of Intention: Reinventing the (Prayer) Wheel* (2019), and *The Second Buddha: Master of Time* (2018).

Vajrabhairava is considered the wrathful emanation of Manjushri, the bodhisattva of wisdom. He assumed this form to mirror back the terrifying appearance of the Lord of Death, Yama. Overpowered and subdued, Yama became a protector of the Buddhist faith. Vajrabhairava is also known as Yamantaka, the Destroyer or Slayer of Yama, in reference to his power to transform even the Lord of Death.

Vajrabhairava is a prominent deity in the Sakya Tibetan Buddhist tradition and one of the most important meditation deities in the Geluk tradition, which is prevalent in Mongolia. This form is based on a vision of the tradition's founder, Tsongkhapa (1357–1419). In Mongolia Vajrabhairava's practices helped supplant indigenous shamanistic exorcism rituals.

Hands and Implements

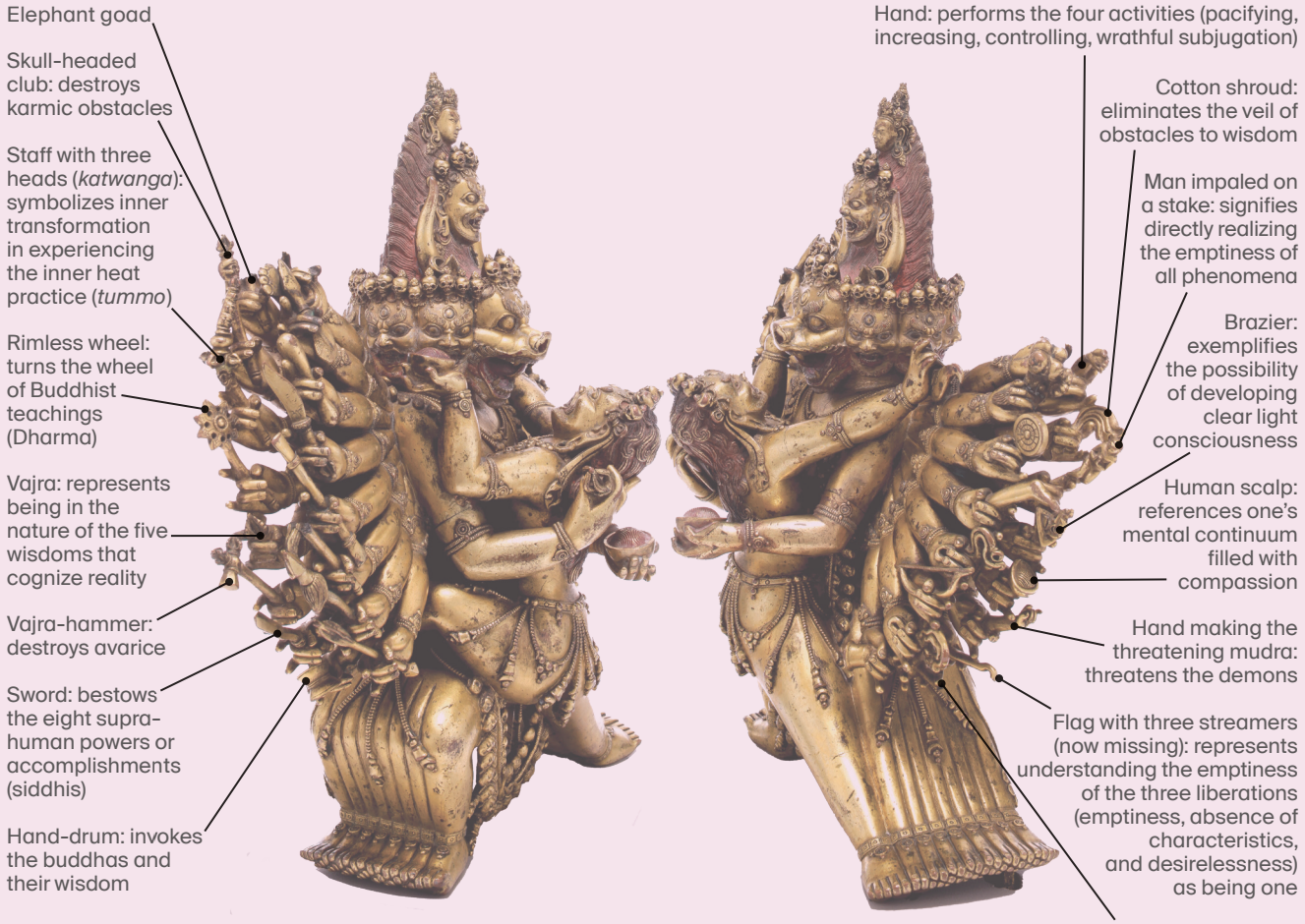
Vajrabhairava's thirty-four hands wield various implements. The two hands that embrace the consort hold a skull cup (*kapala*), a reminder of impermanence symbolizing wisdom, and a curved knife, symbolizing cutting ignorance at its root.

His two uppermost front hands hold an elephant hide. The elephant's head—with its long trunk and floppy ears—drapes down Vajrabhairava's back next to the foot of the consort Vajravetali. Visit online to view.

See More

Explore a 360-degree view of Vajrabhairava at rubinmuseum.org/vajrabhairava360

See this object in person in the Rubin Museum Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room at the Brooklyn Museum.


Elephant goad
Skull-headed club: destroys karmic obstacles
Staff with three heads (*katwanga*): symbolizes inner transformation in experiencing the inner heat practice (*tummo*)
Rimless wheel: turns the wheel of Buddhist teachings (Dharma)
Vajra: represents being in the nature of the five wisdoms that cognize reality
Vajra-hammer: destroys avarice
Sword: bestows the eight supra-human powers or accomplishments (siddhis)
Hand-drum: invokes the buddhas and their wisdom
Hand: performs the four activities (pacifying, increasing, controlling, wrathful subjugation)
Cotton shroud: eliminates the veil of obstacles to wisdom
Man impaled on a stake: signifies directly realizing the emptiness of all phenomena
Brazier: exemplifies the possibility of developing clear light consciousness
Human scalp: references one's mental continuum filled with compassion
Hand making the threatening mudra: threatens the demons
Flag with three streamers (now missing): represents understanding the emptiness of the three liberations (emptiness, absence of characteristics, and desirelessness) as being one
Fan (top now missing): indicates that all things are transient, like illusions

BACK HANDS

Vajrabhairava with Consort Vajravetali; Mongolia; 18th–19th century; gilt copper alloy; Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art; C2005.25.1 (HAR 68853)

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ANGER'S CALL TO MORAL ACTION

Behavioral theory can explain when this emotion becomes fuel for good

by **Monique Mitchell Turner**

Anger seems to be everywhere these days—on the lips of commentators, in headlines, and woven into the fabric of public conversation. Surveys continue to confirm what many already sense: a steady rise in frustration and hostility among citizens. Anger, we are told, is the demon at the door, the unruly guest we must restrain before it consumes us and those around us.

And yet, as I've learned through decades of studying anger, this one-sided portrait obscures a vital truth. Anger is not always a demon. In my decades of research and studying this emotion, I have seen it act as an energizer, a clarifying spark, an emotion that calls us back to what we care most deeply about. It can be the hand holding our moral compass. Anger, when I look at it closely in the lab, is not just about destruction but also about protection. It tells us something morally sacred has been violated, and it demands that we pay attention.

Anger doesn't erupt out of nowhere. It's usually the emotional flare that follows a deeper perception: that something important has been violated. Across my studies, participants consistently report feeling anger when they perceive:

- **Violation of values:** When fairness is denied, cruelty tramples dignity, and promises are broken, people experience these moments as moral breaches.
- **Blocked goals:** When something stands in the way of what someone wants or needs—like a policy that seems unfair or morally corrupt—this frustration lights the fuse.
- **Threats to identity:** When people feel dismissed, disrespected, or humiliated, anger bubbles up as a protest against being devalued.
- **Witnessing harm:** Even when the injustice is not directed at someone personally, seeing others suffer unfairly can spark what is often called moral outrage.

What makes anger unique from other unpleasant emotions is that it emanates from a perceived injustice carried out by a third party who is believed to have acted knowingly. Unlike despair, which slumps inward, anger leans forward. I have watched in my experiments as anger sharpens people's focus on how to fix wrongs. It can slow blinking and increase arousal. These bodily changes reflect not just emotional stimulation but also a desire to mentally engage with angering messages.

In one of my studies, when people were made to feel angry about an unjust campus policy and also made to

believe they could make a difference, they didn't just feel—they acted. They engaged in deeper, more systematic processing of arguments, carefully weighing evidence and distinguishing strong arguments from weak ones. Angry people, when they feel empowered, often scour messages, think critically, and seek truth.

This is why anger so often surfaces at moments of moral clarity. When we see cruelty inflicted on the vulnerable, when we watch fairness trampled, when lies drown out truth—we do not simply shrug. We feel anger rise in us like a tide. The intensity of that feeling is proof of our devotion. If we were indifferent, we would not care enough to be angry. Anger, paradoxically, is often a sign of compassion.

When participants felt angry but powerless, their anger spiraled into cynicism and even hostility rather than problem solving.

And here is what my research has shown most clearly: anger fuels constructive and prosocial responses **only when people feel the injustice can be fixed.** This is the core of the Anger Activism Model, which I first proposed in 2007 and have since tested repeatedly. Across multiple experiments, we found that anger becomes fuel for good when people know the steps they can take and believe they have the power to act.

History bears this out. The civil rights marches of the 1960s were fueled not only by hope but by righteous anger at laws and customs that demeaned human dignity. Women's voices rising for equality carried both sorrow and fury at being silenced. Today's climate activists are propelled by anger at the theft of a livable future. These movements did not spring from contentedness; they sprang from fire. Anger gives people the energy to stand in the streets, to endure arrests, to risk rejection and ridicule. It turns private heartache into public voice.

To be sure, anger can mislead. It can calcify into bitterness or metastasize into vengeance. I have seen this too in my experiments. When participants felt angry but powerless, their anger spiraled into cynicism and even hostility rather than problem solving. Anger, like fire, is not inherently noble. Left unchecked, it can scorch the very values it seeks to defend.

But to say that anger is dangerous is not the same as saying it is worthless. A fire untended can burn down a house; a fire tended can keep a family alive through winter. The task, then, is not to extinguish anger but to learn how to tend it. How do we let it burn just hot enough to energize us, without letting it rage into something that consumes indiscriminately? How do we let anger propel us toward justice, while still tethering us to compassion?

The answer, perhaps, lies in remembering that anger is always telling us something. It is not a noise but a signal. To feel anger is to uncover the line where our values meet the world. "This is too much," it says. "This must not stand." If we can pause long enough to listen, anger becomes less of a demon and more of a messenger. It reveals what we care about and where we are unwilling to compromise.

And perhaps this is why anger can feel both frightening and exhilarating. It strips away pretense and exposes what is real. It demands that we decide: will we act in alignment with the values that anger has revealed, or will we deny them and let the fire turn inward? At its best, anger gives us the courage to choose action, to step into risk, to try to make things right—as long as there is a way to make things right.

So let us not demonize anger too quickly. Anger is no stranger at the gate, no monster lurking in the dark. It is a companion we meet whenever we brush against what we hold sacred. It is the force that whispers—sometimes shouts—that the world can and must be better. The challenge is to meet it with humility, to temper its heat with wisdom, and to let its energy guide us toward repair rather than ruin.

Anger will not save us by itself. But without it, we are in danger of resignation, of accepting what we know to be wrong simply because it feels easier not to care. Better, then, to welcome anger as an ally. Not a demon to be feared, but a testament to what matters, and an energizer to help us act on it.

Monique Mitchell Turner, PhD, is professor and chairperson of the Department of Communication at Michigan State University. An internationally recognized scholar, she is best known for developing the Anger Activism Model, which transformed understandings of emotion in persuasion. Author of more than ninety-five peer-reviewed articles and the forthcoming book *The Power of Emotional Persuasion*, Turner also directs the CASE Lab and codirects the National Social Norms Center, advancing research, teaching, and outreach at MSU.

The Rubin Art Prize Opens Doors

An annual award supports contemporary Himalayan artists

by **Howard Kaplan**

In 2023 three young, passionate creatives in Dharamshala, India, came together with the goal of creating new ways to think about contemporary Tibetan art and community. In the land of the Dalai Lama in exile and in the shadow of the Himalayas, artists Tenzin Melak and Tashi Nyima and actress Lea Taake formed Khadhok — Tibetan Artists' Collective. In 2025 Khadhok became the second recipient of the annual Rubin Museum Himalayan Art Prize, a $30,000 unrestricted cash prize, the largest of its kind in support of contemporary Himalayan artists.

Since its founding, Khadhok has created dedicated spaces for Tibetan contemporary visual artists to present their work, exchange ideas, and strengthen their practice, with a focus on emerging artists, youth empowerment, and Tibetan artistic exchange. The name Khadhok means color, reflecting the richness and vibrancy of Tibetan art.

The members of Khadhok remarked, "We were deeply moved when we first heard about the award. As a young collective, being recognized by an institution with such a long history in Himalayan art makes us feel truly seen and valued. This recognition strengthens our confidence and encourages us to keep growing."

Khadhok's recent projects include *UNSETTLED* (2024), a group exhibition that brought together twenty Tibetan artists from around the world; *Khadhok Mural Project* (2025), a large-scale mural initiative across Dharamshala that provided a visible platform for Tibetan contemporary art, fostering dialogue with locals, visitors, and the broader community; and *Dear Kundun* (2025), a global youth art exhibition featuring art from Tibetan children worldwide marking the ninetieth birthday of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

"Working with Himalayan art and living artists has been part of our approach since the Rubin was founded in 2004," says Jorrit Britschgi, executive director of the Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art. "As a museum without walls we hope to increase visibility and awareness of Tibetan and Himalayan art globally. Khadhok shares this aspiration and has been leading exceptional work in Dharamshala in a short amount of time by creating space for artists to share their work, and to enable dialogues and moments of connection within the local Tibetan community."

In addition to the award to Khadhok, the Rubin Museum funded fifteen art and research projects in its second cycle of annual grants. $200,000 in funding was distributed to support the next generation of artists and scholars dedicated to expanding awareness and understanding of Himalayan art. These projects range from documenting Cham dances in the Tibetan region of Kham and supporting the Lungta (Wind Horse) Art Festival to important research in Tibetan medical illustrations.

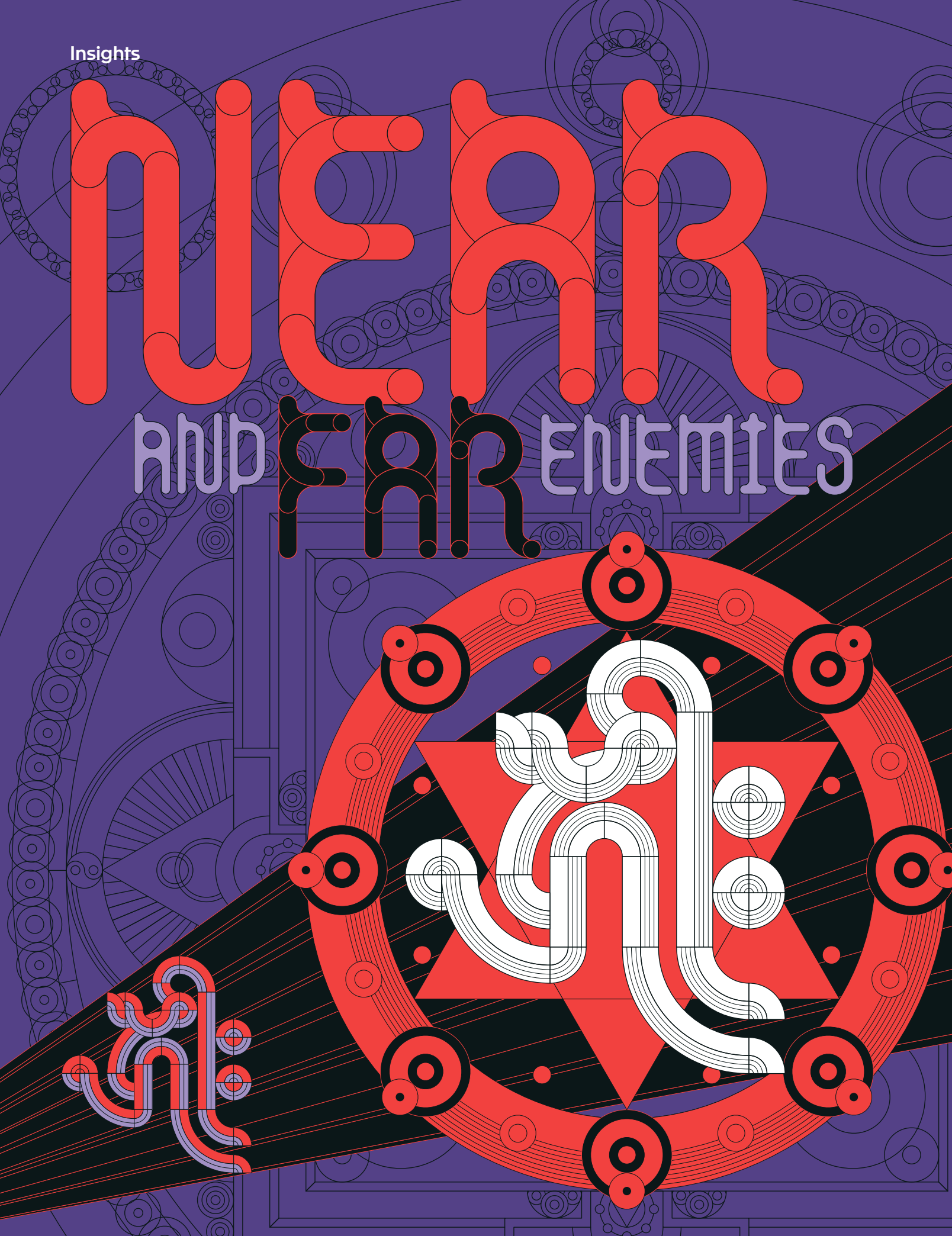
RUBIN

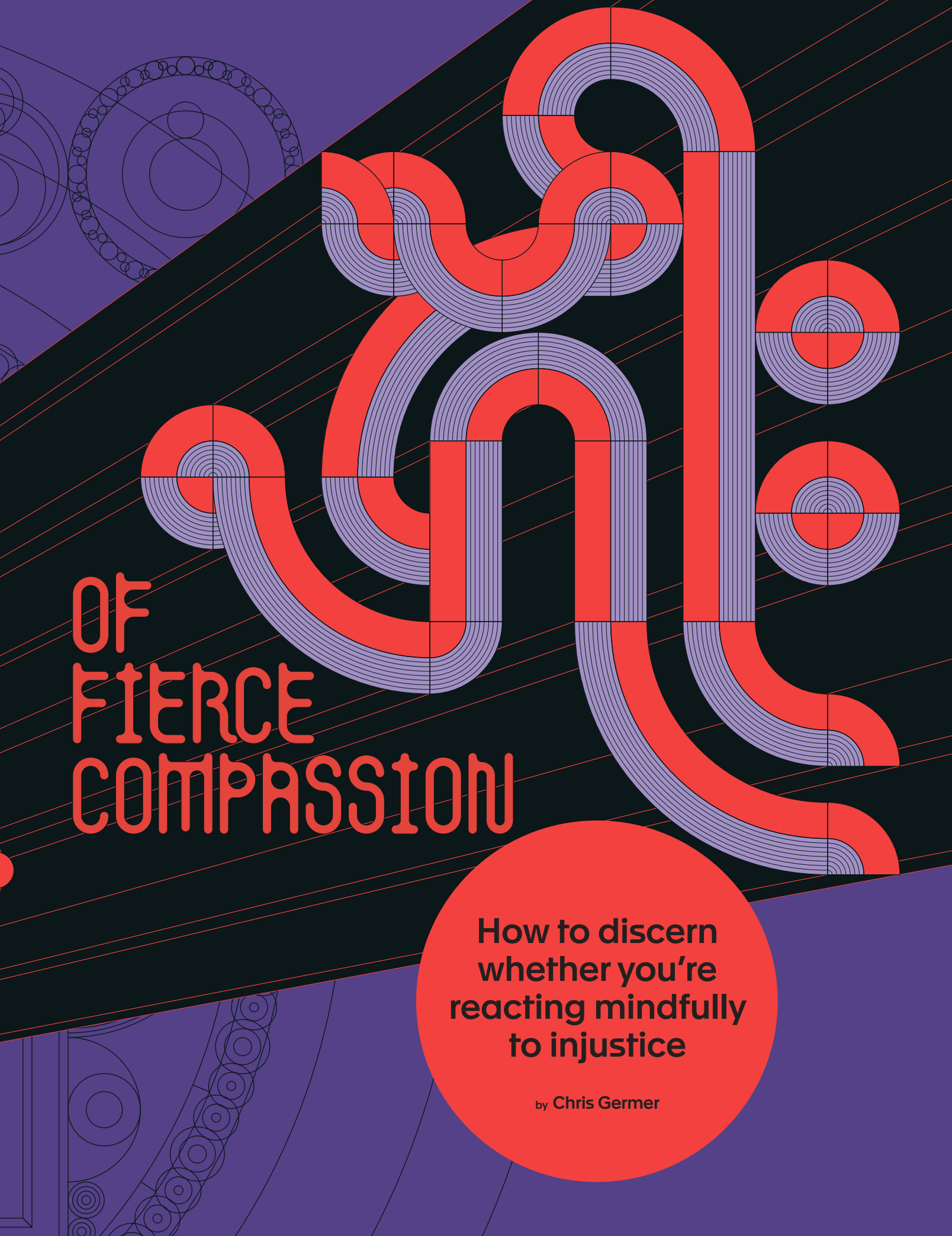
Learn about the Rubin's support of artists and scholars at rubinmuseum.org/himalayan-art-now

Photo by Tenzin Dorjee

Insights

NEAR AND FAR ENEMIES





How to discern whether you're reacting mindfully to injustice

by Chris Germer

What Is Fierce Compassion?

Throughout the world, compassion is generally associated with the yin, or *nurturing*, aspect of compassion. The yin aspect refers to "being with" another person, especially comforting, connecting, and validating the pain of another. But this is hardly the only expression of compassion. For example, is it any less compassionate for a firefighter to run into a burning building to save a trapped individual? Surely not.

Taking action is the "yang" side of compassion, especially protecting others, providing for those in need, and motivating one another to do what's right, even if it's hard. The expression "fierce compassion" includes the qualities of strength, courage, and empowerment to confront social injustice and change it. Fierce compassion also often contains an element of anger.

A good metaphor for fierce compassion is the behavior of a mamma bear when her cub is threatened. The anger aspect can be confusing to people who typically associate compassion with warmth and nurturing. However, learning to harness anger is an important part of fierce compassion. When we suppress our anger, we are likely to lose our capacity to speak truth to power or to take positive action. Conversely, letting our anger run amok can cause irreparable harm to oneself and others.

It is easy to make excuses for harmful behavior in the name of fierce compassion. For example, we may think that cursing at someone who has insulted a loved one is protective and therefore fierce compassion. That's not compassion, however, it's revenge. Or in social justice work, we might think that destroying an innocent person's property is a valid form of protest when we are filled with rage. The pent-up rage might be understandable—Martin Luther King noted, "Riots are the language of the unheard"—but riots are not fierce compassion and inevitably beget more violence.

How Do We Know When We're Fiercely Compassionate?

An exploration of the near and far enemies of fierce compassion can help. "Near" and "far enemies" are Buddhist terms that are usually applied to the Brahmaviharas, or the Four Immeasurables—loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. Near enemies are states that appear *similar* to the desired quality but actually undermine it. Far enemies are the o*pposite* of what we are trying to achieve.

Far Enemies of Fierce Compassion

1. Emotional Reactivity (versus Mindfulness)

Mindfulness is the first component of compassion. Mindfulness is awareness of present-moment experience. It's the first step toward compassion because we need to know that a person is suffering in order to respond compassionately. The opposite of mindfulness, or the far enemy of mindfulness, is *emotional reactivity*—getting hijacked by our emotions, such as anger, fear, or despair, and losing sight of the other person. When we see a person being treated unjustly and anger starts coursing through our bodies, it's easy to get hooked by it. We need a lot of mindful awareness to choose how we're going to respond, rather than simply reacting.

When anger is tempered by mindfulness, is it still the same anger? Probably not quite. In her essay "Was Gandhi Angry?," Stephanie Van Hook quotes Mahatma Gandhi as saying, "It is not that I am incapable of anger, for instance; but I succeed almost on all occasions to keep my feelings under control."[1] In this comment, Gandhi wasn't saying that he suppressed his emotions—he simply wasn't controlled by them. Gandhi harnessed the energy of anger in his nonviolent civil disobedience movement and liberated his country from oppression. That's fierce compassion.

2. Demonizing (versus Common Humanity)

Common humanity involves the recognition that we all suffer, we all wish to be happy, and we're all interconnected. When we imagine that we're morally superior to other people, we subtly disconnect. This is the process of "othering," which taken to an extreme can result in demonizing. *Demonizing* is a far enemy of fierce compassion. Thich Nhat Hanh wrote in his beautiful poem, "Please Call Me by My True Names":

> *I am the child in Uganda, all skin and bones, my legs as thin as bamboo sticks. And I am the arms merchant, selling deadly weapons to Uganda.*[2]

Our sense of common humanity needs to run very deep not to demonize an arms merchant whose actions cause the destruction of innocent beings. However, challenges to common humanity arise every day when we turn on the news and hear about the words and actions of people on the other side of the political spectrum. It's so easy to become morally indignant and to demonize our opponents. In contrast, awareness of common humanity recognizes our differences while remembering that everyone is still a human being.

3. Hostility (versus Kindness)

In yang compassion, kindness is evident when we protect, provide, and motivate others. The opposite of care and kindness is *hostility*, the third far enemy of fierce compassion. The challenge of yang compassion is to be tough and to say "No!," and to create safe boundaries without developing a hostile attitude. The process of demonizing described above is actually a combination of othering and hostility. Hostility is often associated with the emotion of anger, and anger is a natural human emotion that we all need to survive. Anger is also a clear sign that we or others are in physical or emotional danger. This is why people on opposite sides of the political spectrum get so angry. They feel threatened.

To discern whether our anger will be put to compassionate use, we can ask whether we are angry at *injustice* or feel hostile toward a *person*. Compassionate action always spares the person and focuses on the problem. We can love our

Previous page illustration and design by Liamlee (Li Yansong)

enemies. A helpful metaphor is a martial artist. A martial artist has equanimity on the inside and is a warrior on the outside. In our current climate of political polarization, it is especially important not to get swept up in the contagion of hostility toward specific individuals even as we fight to improve our government and leadership.

Near Enemies of Fierce Compassion

What are the near enemies of fierce compassion—qualities of mind that are very similar to fierce compassion but actually undermine it? Again, let's consider the near enemies in relation to the three components of compassion

1. Complacency (versus Mindfulness)

In ancient Buddhist texts, mindfulness is closely related to equanimity. Equanimity is balanced awareness. However, the effort to maintain balanced awareness can sometimes lead to inaction in the face of injustice. *Complacency* is a near enemy of mindfulness, and therefore, fierce compassion. An example is saying that "both sides are at fault" and then doing nothing when one group is obviously harming another. Similarly, when we are not actively working to dismantle racist social structures such as unequal healthcare, education, or voting rights, we are unwittingly supporting them through our acquiescence. Fierce compassion implies that we are willing to act to dismantle systems of injustice as they appear in our lives.

2. Sameness (versus Common Humanity)

A common interpretation of common humanity is that we are all "one." This may be true at an absolute level, but at the level of lived experience, each of us is subject to different causes and conditions. What we have most in common is that we are all different. Some people say, "Can't we just stop talking about our differences and focus instead on the fact that we are all human beings?" This is the assumption of sameness and is a near enemy of common humanity because it disregards and marginalizes the experiences of others. Fierce compassion includes the courage to have difficult conversations about our differences based on race, ethnicity, ability, gender, sexual orientation, and a multitude of other identities.

3. Pity (versus Kindness)

The third component of compassion, kindness, implies that we see others as equals. In contrast, a near enemy to kindness is *pity*. Pity implies that we are looking down on others who we see as unlike ourselves. Pity subtly devalues another person. In the racial justice movement, disenfranchised minorities are not asking for pity; they are asking for equality. Pity arises when those with social privilege are unable or unwilling to let their hearts break from the suffering of others in our society. This kind of emotional numbness makes people feel separate and leads to pity. In contrast, opening to our own pain opens us to the pain of others and motivates us to work together for a better world.

A Test

When you experience an injustice, personal or social, ask yourself the following questions:

Far Enemies:

1. "Am I controlled by my anger?" (emotional reactivity)
2. "Do I feel morally superior?" (demonizing)
3. "Do I want my adversary to suffer?" (hostility)

Near Enemies:

1. "Am I willing to take necessary action?" (non-complacent)
2. "Am I curious about the experience of others?" (non-sameness)
3. "Am I willing to feel the pain of others as my own?" (non-pity)

If you responded "no" to the first three questions, and "yes" to the next three questions, you are probably in a state of fierce compassion.

Taking Wise and Compassionate Action

Practitioners of compassion inevitably ask, "What specific actions should I take?" to address injustice in their lives. To answer that question, compassion is not enough. We need wisdom. Wisdom may be defined as an understanding of the complexity of a given situation and the ability to see one's way through.

Another definition of wisdom is recognizing the short and long-term consequences of an action and choosing the course of action that yields the greatest long-term benefit. Cultivating the qualities of mindfulness, common humanity, and kindness is a good foundation for compassionate action, and when we add a measure of wisdom, we can surely change the world for the better.

The first version of this essay was originally published in November 2018 with contributions from several mindful self-compassion teachers, notably Kristin Neff, Hilde Steinhauser, Regula Saner, Susie Fairchild, and Aimee Eckhardt. An updated version was published in September 2020 on the Center for Mindful Compassion website. The version that appears here has been lightly edited from the 2020 essay.

[1]Mahatma Gandhi, *Young India*, October 1, 1931; quoted by Stephanie Van Hook, "Was Gandhi Angry?," Metta Center for Nonviolence (2015).
[2]Thich Nhat Hanh, *Call Me by My True Names: The Collected Poems of Thich Nhat Hanh* (Parallax Press, 2001), 72.

Chris Germer, PhD, is a clinical psychologist and lecturer on psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. He co-developed the Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) program with Kristin Neff, which has been taught to over 250,000 people around the world. They wrote two popular books: *The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook* and *Mindful Self-Compassion for Burnout*. Chris has also written several books and articles on mental health, including *The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion.* He leads workshops on self-compassion internationally, and he maintains a small psychotherapy practice in Massachusetts.

Liamlee (Li Yansong) is a Beijing-based Mongolian graphic designer whose practice focuses on the visual transformation of written forms. His work centers on experimental typography in Chinese characters, and since 2024 he has expanded his research into Sanskrit script design. See his portfolio at behance.net/liamsoso

Storytelling Is Service

A journalist shares how stories protect the vulnerable and bring us together

by **Howard Kaplan**

"I always knew that I wanted to be a professional question asker," says Noor Tagouri. As a child she asked so many questions that her father told her, "There's a name for this thing that you love so much. It's called journalism." That inquisitive, investigative instinct helped her forge a path into the worlds of journalism and activism, using her voice to draw attention to the stories of society's marginalized people. Her stories can be found in a variety of media, including films, videos, podcasts, print, and brand campaigns. In Arabic, her means light, and Noor's stories shine light on some of the most misunderstood and misrepresented communities in the nation and around the world.

This work has included reporting on one of the worst cases of medical abuse in US history. Forest Haven, a residential facility for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Laurel, Maryland, closed in 1991 due to severe medical abuse that resulted in patient deaths. In 2015, when Noor became interested in telling the story while working at a local television station in Maryland, there were still lawsuits pending. She proposed the idea to her news director. She felt it was a huge story, right in their backyard, that had been completely overlooked. He told her no, because it would require trespassing and could garner government criticism. "That was when I knew that this wasn't the place for me. It was too confined. I wanted to tell the story of Forest Haven without exploiting anyone further and honoring their truth." She kept returning to this question: "How can the story of Forest Haven be told as a form of justice for those who have been wronged?"

The result was a stunning documentary series, *The Trouble They've Seen*, focused on the people who had been institutionalized, survived the abuse, and were now, years later, in an art and therapy program preparing for a concert. "How can we honor the artist in those people and the light that they've been able to tap into amidst all of the darkness? It doesn't negate the darkness—but people still find a way."

Shortly after the Forest Haven project, a new digital news outlet was launching a documentary team in Washington, DC, and they asked Noor to help start it. "When you choose to tell the truth in this way and maintain a sense of truth in your own voice and your own approach, it also connects you to the other people who are doing that as well." Noor founded her own media company and continues to tell the stories of people whose voices have been stifled or ignored. As she says, "Storytelling is a form of service."

Noor Tagouri is an award-winning journalist, producer, and founder of At Your Service, a consulting and production company telling representative stories as a form of service.

An Institute to Empower Educators

Expanding resources for faculty to teach about Himalayan art

by **Howard Kaplan**

Project Himalayan Art, the Rubin Museum's landmark education initiative, was created as an interdisciplinary resource for learning about Himalayan, Tibetan, and Inner Asian art and cultures. It consists of a robust digital platform, a publication featuring 108 object-centered essays, and *Gateway to Himalayan Art*, a traveling exhibition specially designed for colleges, universities, and art museums to introduce the main forms, concepts, meanings, and living traditions of Himalayan art. All three spokes of the Project Himalayan Art wheel focus on cross-cultural exchange with Tibet at the center and Buddhism as the thread that connects the diverse cultural regions.

In 2025 Project Himalayan Art added an Institute for Higher Education to its robust approach to teaching, with a virtual six-day workshop to provide educators, including PhD candidates, with opportunities to learn about Himalayan art and cultures from scholars and interdisciplinary experts. The institute combined presentations, smaller group sessions, and collaborative workshops. Throughout the intensive, the presenters and participants used the Project Himalayan Art digital platform as a learning tool.

Themes of the sessions included Himalayan art and the religious imagination; representations of the feminine in Himalayan art, ritual, literature and popular culture; cultural and technological connections through art media; the art of medicine and healing; and Himalayan art and rituals for sustaining the environment. Participants also spoke about difficult topics faced by educators, such as navigating cultural sensitivity with respect to sacred images and cultural appropriation in the present day.

"Participants were especially engaged by the thematic organization of the sessions, especially of the more universal themes, such as those related to environment, health, and well-being, as they could be incorporated into diverse disciplines and classes and address current interests of the students in higher education," said Elena Pakhoutova, the Rubin's senior curator of Himalayan art and the institute's director.

Throughout the week, participants expressed an appreciation for the breadth of the content and for gaining exposure to new learning resources that they could bring back to their classrooms. One participant said, "I truly appreciate exploring different ways to incorporate Himalayan art in my teaching activities with specialists and colleagues across disciplines. This gave me a lot of materials to think about and to bring into my teaching in the fall."

As an extension of the institute, participants will develop their own teaching syllabi incorporating Project Himalayan Art and learning materials from the institute. These will be included in the Project Himalayan Art collection of teaching resources for educators.

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Explore Project Himalayan Art at rubinmuseum.org/projecthimalayanart

Photo by Adelaide Ryder

Activity

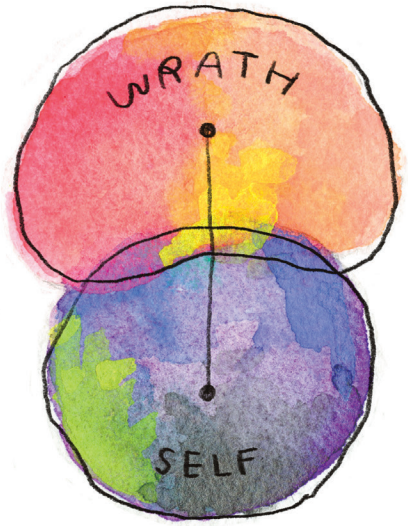
FIVE STAGES TO

by **Vicki Tan**

Wrath is that fierce energy that rises when something sacred to you is threatened. Different from everyday irritation or petty anger, it's the protective fire that ignites when you witness injustice, cruelty, or harm to what you care about.

Integrating wrath isn't about "becoming Zen" or transcending anger. It's about learning to hear what your fury is protecting, then channeling that protective fire into something that can be directed and embodied in alignment with your values. This process matters because the world needs people who can be fierce without being destructive, who can fight for what matters without losing themselves in the fight.

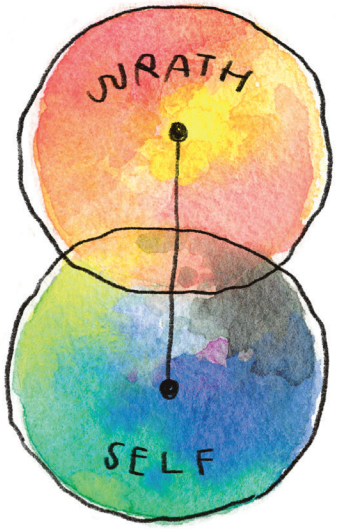
How to use this guide:
Find yourself in these five stages (not where you think you should be, but where you are right now). Work with the corresponding practice until that energy feels less like something happening to you and more like something you can wield with intention. The goal isn't to eliminate wrath but to become its wise partner.



STAGE 1

OVERWHELM

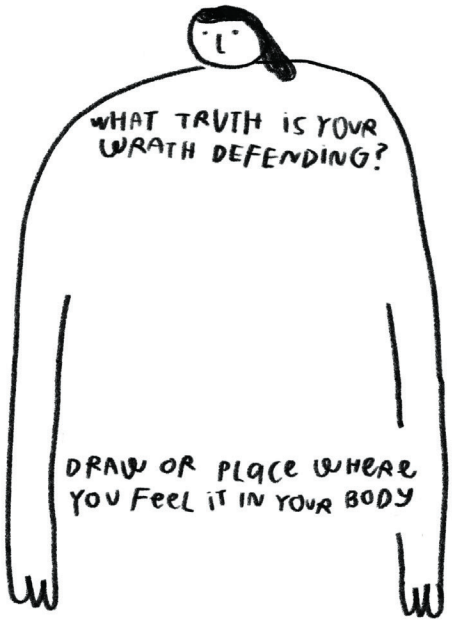
Your wrath feels overwhelming and all-consuming. It screams, "This is wrong!" or "I must protect!" The energy is urgent, mixed with fear and reactivity. You feel like you must act immediately or something terrible will happen.



STAGE 2

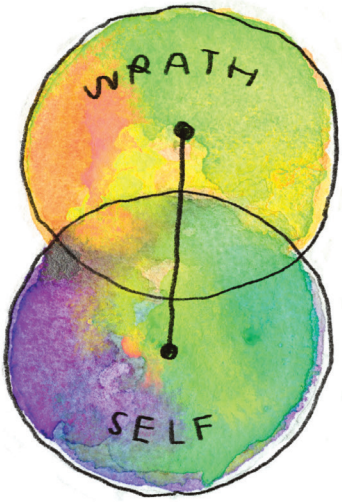
RECOGNIZING

Your wrath is pointing to something you deeply value. It says, "This matters to me." The energy is intense, but you can hear wisdom beneath the fury. You can feel this energy revealing what you truly stand for.



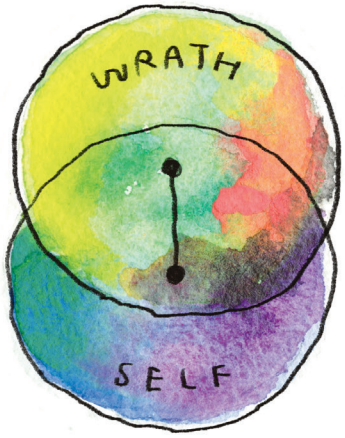
Vicki Tan is a Taiwanese American designer based in San Francisco. Her work explores the relationship between behavioral science and product design. She is currently design staff at Pinterest and was previously at Spotify, Headspace, Lyft, and Google. Her debut illustrated book, *Ask This Book a Question*, teaches better decision-making through the lens of cognitive bias.

INTEGRATING WRATH



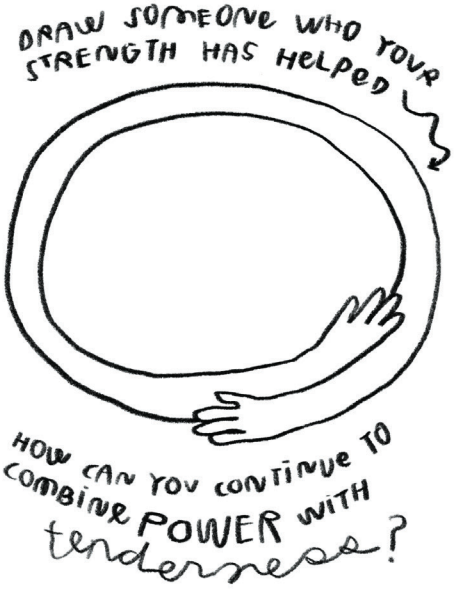
STAGE 3
DIRECTING

Your wrath feels like a wise counselor, saying, "You have the power to make a difference" and "This is yours to address." The energy is focused and purposeful. You sense it is calling you toward leadership and responsibility.



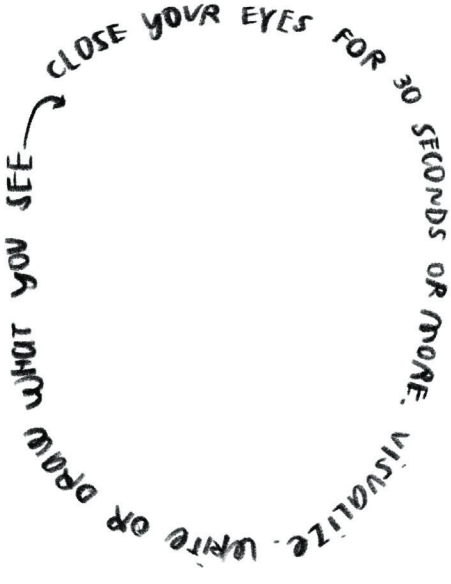
STAGE 4
PARTNERING

Your wrath feels like a trusted inner guardian that arises when needed, imparting guidance about when to be gentle and when to be fierce. The message is clear and purposeful: "This is how I serve." You trust this energy's wisdom.



STAGE 5
EMBODYING

Your wrath is one with your wisdom and compassion. It's not a separate voice but part of how you naturally respond to the world. It moves through you as fierce love whenever protection or awakening is needed, saying, "I am a guardian of what is sacred."



Divine Wrath

The transformative power of the goddess

by **Nina Petek**

In Hinduism, goddesses are understood as manifestations of a single supreme deity—Mahadevi. The myth of Mahadevi became the cornerstone of the Hindu goddess tradition known as Shaktism. She is celebrated in the *Devi Mahatmya* (ca. 550 CE), which is part of the *Markandeya Purana* (ca. 250 CE), whose central narrative details her origin story. The text recounts her first appearance as the warrior goddess Durga, who slays the buffalo demon Mahishasura.

Durga: Warrior Goddess

In one version of the myth, Mahishasura is granted a boon by Brahma that no male deity could defeat him. Empowered by this protection, he sets out to conquer the universe, including Indra's celestial realm. In desperation, Indra appeals to Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu, whose collective fury births a massive force of energy that condenses into the radiant form of Mahadevi. The gods forge replicas of their weapons and offer them to her, urging her to defeat the demon. From Himalaya, the god of the mountains, she receives a tiger (in some versions of the stories and depictions, a lion) named Ambika, and from Kubera, the god of wealth, a cup of wine.

As the newly born goddess lets out a terrible and triumphant laugh, joined by the cries and cheers of the gods, Mahishasura sends his troops to investigate the source of the commotion. His soldiers return describing a vision of an unmarried goddess, dazzlingly beautiful yet terrifying, embodying a fusion of opposites—affection and ferocity, gentleness and wrath. Captivated, the demon proposes marriage. With thunderous defiance, she refuses. Even when he assumes a handsome human form, she remains unmoved, declaring her purpose: to uphold dharma, the righteous order of the universe. She challenges him—fight or retreat to hell. Enraged by her rejection, the demon attacks, shifting into various animal forms. The goddess, drinking wine and mounting her tiger, relentlessly pursues him. With a serene and unwavering grace, she tramples him, drives a trident through his chest, and severs his head with a discus.

This myth and its variants starkly contrast with the normative feminine ideal found in the *Dharmashastra*, a collection of texts outlining codes of law, ethics, and conduct. There, a woman's essential nature is framed as passive, subordinate, and nonconfrontational. Her identity is confined to roles determined by male authority—wife, mother, caregiver. But in the *Devi Mahatmya*, this paradigm is overturned. The demon's immediate impulse to domesticate the goddess through marriage reflects the drive to subordinate feminine power.

Mahadevi resists this entirely. Within her infinite energy (shakti) resides the strength to defy prescribed roles and surpass the combined might of all male deities. Importantly, she defeats the demon without their direct intervention. Their powers merge within her, affirming her as the Supreme Reality, both immanent in the gods and at the same time transcending them.

Kali: The Destroyer

Once marginal to the brahmanical spiritual order, the goddess became an integral figure in India's religious landscape. This transition is reflected in the *Markandeya Purana* and the emergence of a new tantric metaphysics between 300 and 600 CE. Take Kali, for instance: with her wild and defiant identity, she long existed on the margins of conventional religious beliefs. Yet now she is one of most revered deities in Hinduism. Her iconography and mythic identity were shaped in the tantric texts of the seventh and eighth centuries, particularly in the story of her emergence from Durga's wrath, as told in the *Devi Mahatmya*.

According to the narrative, the gods promise the demons that the goddess can only defeat them if she appears before them naked. Unaware of this agreement, Devi strides into battle—only to learn of the condition in shock. Enraged by this deception, she transforms into Kali, a monstrous embodiment of fury, and unleashes a rampage that obliterates everything in her path. This myth is central to her identity: whereas Durga destroys evil to restore cosmic order, Kali, born of violated dignity, annihilates all—even good. Her wrath rejects all order, all hierarchy, all kind of control. In this, she becomes the destroyer who answers to no one.

Yet Kali, although it seems paradoxical, is also worshiped as the Divine Mother. Shiva plays a pivotal role in this transformation. As Kali's fury threatens to annihilate the universe, Shiva lies down in her path. When she unknowingly steps on him, she pauses. Seeing him beneath her feet, a gentle smile tinged with modesty spreads across her face. She recalls her other identity—as the compassionate mother of the cosmos. Significantly, Shiva does not stop her with command, force, or even words. Through passive stillness, he reminds her of who she is. Her restraint is her own choice. In this moment, her fury does not vanish but becomes self-aware.

This is also where the metaphysical relationship between Shiva and Kali reveals its profound significance. In the *Jayadratha Yamala*, Kali is described as the Supreme Absolute, the primordial reality, the dynamic cosmic womb, the source of all manifestations and the final destination of all dissolution. She is dynamic even in her unmanifest form. Her wrath is not chaos but raw, pre-cosmic energy, shakti—creative, generative, transformative. She is the thunderous embrace of all existence—wrath and radiance alike. Her wrath is a preexistent order, transcendent energy of becoming. It is the generative force through which the unmanifest becomes manifest, and simultaneously, she is the essence into which all things return. But to manifest a structured universe, she requires Shiva: the principle of form and limitation.

Rituals for Transformation

In metaphysical terms, Kali's wrath is an immeasurable force, shakti, but it also mirrors the very structure of reality. In life, there are forces beyond our control we must accept as expressions of a greater cosmic order. This requires a transformation of human ordinary perception, something her devotees strive toward. While Kali is often venerated in temples, her most intimate rites unfold in remote, unsettling spaces, such as crossroads, the wilderness, or dense forests. The *Kalikula* texts describe night rituals held at cremation grounds, surrounded by ash, fire, and jackals. Like in Buddhist tantras, these liminal spaces serve as arenas for radical inner transformation. Here, the practitioner confronts death directly, transcends fear, and awakens to truth.

These rituals reveal that true awakening demands embracing the full range of experience, even the painful and terrifying. Life is interwoven with joy and suffering, *sukha* and *dukkha*, which is also an insight that lies at the very heart of the Hindu worldview. Through devotion, the practitioner reconciles with their own mortality and finds serenity, even amid the goddess's furious presence. Fire, ever-present in these rites, symbolizes the goddess herself—life-giving and destructive, purifying and consuming.

But these rituals are not merely acts of surrender to the goddess's unpredictability; they also awaken constructive wrath in human beings as a transformative force that purges impurity and dissolves the ego, which is shrouded in illusion and, due to its attachments, filled with anger (*krodha*), which causes selfish and harmful actions. Wrath, in this sense, is understood as a rebellion against the ego, a tearing away from its attachments, a thunderous "no" to its weaknesses, and a force through which the strategies of liberation are enacted.

In this transformative dimension, Kali assumes Durga's role: the annihilator of evil. She dwells within her devotees as eternal fire—a wrath that both destroys and renews, liberating from fear and illusion. When Kali awakens wrath within, it is not a descent into violence but a leap beyond fear. She shatters inertia, reshapes reality, and continually renews life. This wrath is not mindless destruction but the force that ultimately nullifies even itself, finally arriving at a place of deep equanimity.

The Feminine Answer to the Violence of the World

Whether as Kali or Durga, the goddess penetrates the human core and interrogates it. She challenges normative structures and enables spiritual and social freedom. Her thunderous wrath—a rebellion in defense of justice and truth and transmuting power of change—continues to reverberate across the layered realities of India and beyond. Wrath, in this vision, does not merely destroy the old; it gives rise to the new. Wrath is the fire that purifies and reshapes, the quake that shatters false ground. It protects compassion, restores dignity, and demands courage—not for hatred, but fierce love in defense of truth.

Therefore divine wrath is not the opposite of compassion, but its guardian. It is a feminine answer to the violence of the world—a visceral, sacred impulse that urges us beyond fear and complacency. When Kali steps on Shiva in fury and awakens to her own nature, she reveals this paradox: boundless power joined with mindful restraint. At this intersection lies her divinity—and our own. For in her wrath, the goddess becomes profoundly human, and in turn, the human becomes divine.

Divine wrath in Hindu goddesses is never mindless but ethical; it is a response to injustice, shame, and imbalance—and so it is in the human realm as well. Divine wrath dissolves ordinary anger, which arises from the selfish tendencies of the human ego, and creates space for new ethical and existential paradigms that lead us toward a deeper understanding of our being. At the same time, the goddess's wrath is a magnificent affirmation of life in all its terrifying splendor. It is an ode to all the facets of existence, to life and death, and to the mystery that transcends them both.

Dr. Nina Petek is a professor in the Department of Philosophy at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, where she teaches courses on Hindu and Buddhist philosophical and religious traditions. Her current research centers on the philosophical teachings and meditative practices of Vajrayana Buddhism, including work conducted as part of the research project "Buddhism in the Himalayan Deserts: The Tradition of Yogis and Yoginis in Ladakh," funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.

Manjari Sharma is a Los Angeles–based visual artist exploring ritual, identity, memory, and mythology. Born and raised in Mumbai, India, Manjari uses photography, sound, motion, projection, and collage in her storytelling. Her works have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Vice*, *Wall Street Journal*, *LA Times*, *Huffington Post*, CNN, and NPR. She is a 2024 recipient of the prestigious Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant, and her art can be found in the permanent collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, MFA Houston, and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, among other public and private collections.

Previous page artwork by Manjari Sharma

Teaching Compassion in Classrooms

A new Mandala Lab program enriches New York City schools

by **Howard Kaplan**

The students were curious as they watched educators from the Rubin Museum unpack a suitcase filled with objects and new ideas to share. Fourth and fifth graders from the American Sign Language School in the Kips Bay neighborhood of Manhattan were about to learn lessons on compassion, mindfulness, and connection based on ideas found in Himalayan art and teachings from the Rubin Museum's Mandala Lab. The program taught by the Rubin includes art-making activities, guided discussion, engagement with collection objects, mindfulness techniques, and hands-on learning. Once the objects were unpacked, the students became fascinated by the *damaru*, a two-headed drum from the Rubin's touch collection, used in Buddhist practices to bring awareness back to the present moment.

"Have you ever thought so much about lunch that you forgot what's happening right now?" one educator asked. The students laughed and nodded in agreement. It was a perfect way to introduce themes of mindfulness and self-awareness.

Then it was the students' turn. The educators distributed colorful materials for the fourth and fifth graders to create their own drums from cups, balloons, beads, and yarn. Teachers and Rubin educators moved gently through the space, encouraging creativity and conversation. The kids twisted their instruments to make a soft rhythm, and they wrote coping strategies on the sides: listen to music, take a walk, talk to a friend. One simply wrote, "smell flowers."

"The conversations happening are very emotional," says Jacqueline Smith, the Rubin's manager of curriculum development and education. "They open up space for one-on-one connections between students, instructors, and teachers in a way that other programs don't."

The teachings draw inspiration from the Vairochana Mandala that depicts the Five Wisdom Buddhas. These help practitioners transform the five afflictive emotions that cloud our worldview—pride, anger, attachment, envy, and ignorance—into wisdoms. Each of the five lessons focuses on deepening our awareness of these challenging emotions and how they show up in our lives.

As a global museum dedicated to the arts and cultures of the Himalayas, the Rubin Museum strives to make programs relevant and relatable to people's contemporary lives. Grounded in ideas from the Rubin's traveling Mandala Lab installation and principles of Social, Emotional, and Ethical (SEE) Learning®, Mandala Lab curriculum lessons are taught in New York City classrooms by Rubin teaching artists through the program Mandala Lab in Your Classroom. The Rubin partnered with twenty-five schools in 2025 and will continue reaching even more students in 2026. The lessons are also available online to teachers worldwide.

Thanks to educators from the Rubin, the classroom was filled with wonder, surprise, and the unforgettable sounds of the drums made by the students.

RUBIN

To access lessons and learn more, visit rubinmuseum.org/educator-resources

Photo by Jessica Bal

That Could Be Me

The cofounder of BlinkNow on channeling ferocity into protection

by **Howard Kaplan**

In 2005, while on her gap year following high school, Maggie Doyne went traveling in Nepal. "I was working with Nepalese refugees in Northeastern India, and I was absolutely in love and at home, finding purpose and learning so much." One day she and her Nepalese friend Sunita trekked through the Himalayas to visit the village where Sunita had grown up and then left as a refugee. And there, on a riverbed, she saw children breaking rocks to survive. "I felt anger and disappointment. I felt rage at having grown up with things and protections. In that moment, I saw what it was like to be cold. I saw what it was like to be a child laborer. It opened a sense of compassion and oneness: That could be me. I could be her. She is me."

The pain and despair awoke something within her. She began to ask, "What do I have to give? What am I going to do about it? It's easier to stay here and face the sun than it is to turn around and do nothing." Although she was only eighteen, something shifted, and she knew she had to act. She decided to stay in Nepal. "There is a wrath that comes out when children are not kept safe and are not given opportunity," Maggie says. "There's a ferocity in protection."

With cofounder Tope Malla, an orphan from Nepal, they set out to change what orphanhood looks like in the region. The two asked themselves why is it that orphanages are dark and dismal, neglected and forgotten? They wanted to reimagine and reinvent that experience. The pair started out small. They had little money, just what Maggie had earned back home from babysitting and what Tope made from being a migrant worker and porter. They learned children needed more than just schooling. "There's a lot of other things that they are up against, and we really needed a holistic, integrative approach." They didn't set up to create a major global organization, but it evolved over two decades, transforming from a home to a school, then adding a community center and women's center, food and farming programs, healthcare, and aid assistance during natural disasters. Today BlinkNow is a world leader in community development, with more than 175 Nepalese team members leading its Kopila Valley programs in Nepal, supported by a small US-based team.

"If we care for children, provide love and protection, sanctity and opportunity, they are going to be raised with love and, in turn, they're going to give love," Maggie says. "It's been a twenty-year journey of taking pain, violence, and despair and transforming it into love and hope."

Maggie Doyne, cofounder and CEO of the BlinkNow Foundation, has dedicated her life to educating children and empowering women in Nepal.

RUBIN

A global museum dedicated to presenting Himalayan art and its insights

Founded in 2004, the Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art serves people internationally through exhibitions, participatory experiences, a dynamic digital platform, and partnerships. Inspired and informed by Himalayan art, the Rubin invites people to contemplate the human experience and deepen connections with the world around them in order to expand awareness, enhance well-being, and cultivate compassion.

Get News in Your Inbox

Sign up for the Rubin's newsletter for the latest articles, podcast episodes, videos, and more, plus stories and news from the Museum.

Our monthly emails offer opportunities to explore art from the Rubin's collection and contemplate big questions at the center of our shared human experience.

Subscribe at rubinmuseum.org/newsletter

About the Collection

The Rubin's preeminent collection of nearly 4,000 objects spans more than 1,500 years to the present day. Included are artworks of exceptional quality and historical significance from the Tibetan Plateau, with examples from northern Indian, Nepalese, Bhutanese, Mongolian, and Chinese culturally related areas. The collection consists primarily of scroll paintings (thangkas and paubhas) and sculptures, as well as masks, textiles, illuminated manuscripts, religious implements, and other objects from these regions.

Expanding Access

Through ongoing research initiatives, exhibitions, scholarly publications, and long-term artwork loans to other museums and institutions, the Rubin cares for, studies, and shares the Museum's collection, expanding access to Himalayan art in unprecedented ways.

Bodhisattva Kshitigarbha; Tibet; 17th century; gilt copper alloy with pigment; Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art; gift of the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation; F1997.12.4

Projects & Exhibitions The Rubin presents projects, exhibitions, and collaborative initiatives that deepen awareness of Himalayan art and cultures. Often working in partnership with other institutions, the Rubin serves the public locally, nationally, and internationally.

Photo by Elena Pakhoutova

Project Himalayan Art

Project Himalayan Art is the Rubin's flagship educational initiative for learning about Himalayan, Tibetan, and Inner Asian art and cultures. It comprises three parts—a publication, traveling exhibition, and digital platform—and is designed to support the inclusion of these subjects into undergraduate teachings on Asia. The project serves students, scholars, teachers, and art enthusiasts nationally and beyond, filling gaps in the learning space.

Publication
Himalayan Art in 108 Objects offers an accessible introduction to Himalayan art as illuminated by a selection of objects from the Neolithic era to today. Over seventy international scholars from different fields and disciplines contextualize the art within religious, social, literary, and material culture.

Green Tara; Tibet; 18th century; gilt copper alloy with traces of pigment; Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art; C2005.16.46 (HAR 65469)

Traveling Exhibition
Gateway to Himalayan Art is an introduction to the art and cultures of the greater Himalayan region featuring artworks from the Rubin's collection. The nationally traveling exhibition presents the fundamental visual language and meanings of Tibetan Buddhist and other Himalayan art, outlines the materials and techniques used to create such works, and highlights the living practices and intentions behind these objects. The exhibition foregrounds voices from Himalayan communities, including artists, practitioners, and teachers. The exhibition next travels to the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at the University of Oregon (February 21–July 5, 2026) and USC Pacific Asia Museum at the University of Southern California (fall 2026).

Digital Platform
The Project Himalayan Art digital platform is a hub for the study of Himalayan art. It combines materials from the exhibition and the publication with multimedia content as well as a glossary and teaching resources. These resources contextualize the living ritual, cultural, and art-making practices and traditions of the greater Himalayan region. The site enables teachers to seamlessly source materials for their classes in a range of disciplines and encourages students to do their own extensive research.

Rubin Museum Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room at the Brooklyn Museum

On view through April 20, 2031

Since its debut in 2013, the Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room has been one of the Rubin's most popular installations, providing an immersive experience inspired by a traditional shrine. Now the Shrine Room is on view in the Brooklyn Museum's Arts of Asia galleries as part of a multiyear collaboration. The Shrine Room presents more than one hundred artworks and ritual objects as they would be displayed in an elaborate Tibetan Buddhist household shrine—a space used for devotional prayer, offerings, and rituals.

Photo by Filip Wolak

Mandala Lab

The Mandala Lab is a traveling interactive installation that invites people to get curious about their emotions. Inspired by powerful Buddhist principles, the Mandala Lab features five thought-provoking, playful experiences that offer insights into Buddhist teachings to the public for free. It has already traveled to Bilbao, London, and Milan, with plans to continue its European tour in 2026 and beyond.

Photo courtesy of The Wellbeing Project

Wangduechhoeling Palace Museum and Cultural Center Partnership

The Rubin and the Bhutan Foundation have launched a partnership to promote cultural preservation and education in Bhutan, working closely with the Wangduechhoeling Palace, the birthplace of Bhutan's monarchy. The Rubin is supporting expertise in curatorial practice, audience engagement, collections management, and exhibition installation, as well as co-creating workshops, bringing together participants from Bhutan and the Rubin for mutual learning and professional exchange.

Photo courtesy of Wangduechhoeling Palace

Ritual Peg (*purba*); Tibet; 17th century; wood with pigments; Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art; C2007.4.1 (HAR 65781)

Family & School Programs The Rubin presents an array of in-person and online programs for adults and families that dive deeper into the art from the Himalayas.

Family Programs

The Rubin presents family programs that explore the art and cultures of the greater Himalayan region and celebrate festivals, such as Losar, the Tibetan New Year. Join us in venues across New York City for activities both kids and grown-ups will enjoy.

Photo by Jessica Bal

Mandala Lab in Your Classroom

Mandala Lab in Your Classroom is a free program available to all New York City schools that aims to cultivate emotional awareness and compassion in the classroom through Himalayan art and its insights. Lessons taught by Rubin teaching artists intertwine art-making activities, engagement with the Museum's collection, mindfulness techniques, and interdisciplinary and tactile learning to help students develop critical life skills.

Learn more at rubinmuseum.org/mandala-lab-classroom

Photo by Jessica Bal

Opportunities for Artists & Scholars The Rubin celebrates and promotes artistic work and research in Himalayan art through grant opportunities and the Rubin Art Prize.

Research and Art Grants

The Rubin's annual grant program aims to expand awareness and understanding of Himalayan art globally by providing direct support to artists and scholars. Grants fund scholarship and research into Himalayan art in academic, education, and exhibition contexts, as well as artists whose practices give visibility to the rich cultural legacy and living traditions of the greater Himalayan region. The period to submit letters of inquiry for the 2026 grant cycle is from February 16 to March 6, 2026.

Rubin Museum Himalayan Art Prize

The Rubin Art Prize is an international award given annually to an artist who is inspired by traditional Himalayan art forms and techniques and the meanings and insights they offer. It aims to support and celebrate the dynamic dialogue between Himalayan art and contemporary life, ensuring that the rich cultural heritage of the greater Himalayan region continues to inspire and resonate globally. The $30,000 unrestricted cash prize is the largest international award in support of contemporary art related to Himalayan regions.

Rubin Museum Distinguished Lecture in Himalayan Art at The Met

Discover the rich artistic heritage of the Himalayas through the Rubin Museum Distinguished Lecture in Himalayan Art, hosted at The Met. This annual event presents expert insights into the region's art, cultures, and history, fostering deeper connections with these traditions.

Stay connected to the Rubin's work around the world by subscribing to our newsletter at rubinmuseum.org/newsletter

Khadhok, recipient of the 2025 Rubin Museum Himalayan Art Prize. Photo by Tenzin Dorjee

Get More *Spiral*, Online! Immerse yourself in even more perspectives at the intersection of art, science, and Himalayan cultures via our expanded online multimedia publication.

Engage with rich multimedia content including articles, podcasts, video series, photography, animation, interviews with experts and scholars, art interactives, and more.

Spiral provides a dynamic experience to enhance understanding of Himalayan art, its cultural context, and the insights illuminated by it. Plus, learn about current news and upcoming events from the Rubin.

Delve deeper into Himalayan art, including the Rubin's collection, or contemplate big questions at the center of our shared human experience. New content is published weekly.

Dive into online content at rubinmuseum.org/spiral

Listen, wherever you get your podcasts

Our two original podcasts open new and engaging pathways to learn about Himalayan art and its insights through the exploration of Buddhist concepts, connections to the collection, personal stories from scholars, scientists, and artists, and more.

AWAKEN

In this podcast about the dynamic path to enlightenment and what is means to "wake up," guests share personal stories about how they've experienced a shift in their awareness, and as a result, their perspective on life.

Mindfulness Meditation

This weekly podcast is inspired by works of art from the Rubin's collection and led by prominent meditation teachers.

You Make It Possible The Rubin is making more of an impact than ever before, as we bring our work to communities across the United States and the world. We rely on you, our generous supporters, to promote understanding and appreciation of Himalayan art and cultures. With your help, we offer inspiring and meaningful experiences to people of all ages and backgrounds.

Make a donation

Donate any amount and become a Friend of the Rubin—a community of supporters who champion the Rubin's mission to celebrate and present Himalayan art and its insights with diverse audiences around the globe. Your gift as a Friend provides essential support across all Rubin projects and helps empower the next generation of artists and scholars.

Give a major gift

Donations of $5,000 and above enable you to align your philanthropy and passion with generous support for the Rubin's annual programs, traveling exhibitions, scholarly work, education, and multiyear initiatives. Your contribution plays a vital role as the Rubin deepens and extends its reach through new approaches while bringing arts education and social-emotional learning to students in New York City and beyond.

Connect us to your philanthropic organization

Institutional partners are essential to our global programming. We invite connections to your philanthropic organizations. Corporate sponsorship, starting at $10,000, offers alignment with your social responsibility strategy and presents an excellent opportunity to expand your community, promote products, and offer access to Museum content.

Learn more at rubinmuseum.org/support

Photo by Elena Pakhoutova

Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art

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